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SHORT STUDIES
IN
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BY

HAMILTON WRIGHT MABIE

AUTHOR OF "MY STUDY FIRE," "UNDER THE TREES AND
ELSEWHERE," "NORSE STORIES RETOLD FROM
THE EDDAS," ETC., ETC.

NEW YORK
DODD, MEAD & COMPANY

1892

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PREFACE.

THAT these brief chapters may prove helpful to readers of books who desire to become students of literature, is the hope which the writer ventures to cherish in the face of defects more obvious to him than to the most unsympathetic critic. These studies are not critical but interpretative ; they are neither exhaustive nor inclusive ; they are mainly hints and suggestions. Each chapter might be elaborated into a volume. If they serve to indicate the leading lines of literary development, the fundamental divisions and distinctions, the deep and vital tendencies, they will accomplish the end for which they were written. That they represent deep convictions concerning the significance of literature rather than a purely critical attitude, will be apparent to the most indifferent reader. The writer is glad of an opportunity of putting forth what he trusts may be, to some readers at least, a book of insight, rather than a contribution to the

large and invaluable mass of books of literary scholarship. It is the inevitable limitation of a volume dealing with so large a subject within so small a compass that it must be, in a sense, superficial; if it shall lead any reader to that deeper study of books which opens the heart of literature, the reproach of superficiality will be gladly borne. The indebtedness of the writer of a series of studies covering so wide a field to his predecessors and contemporaries in literary history and criticism must necessarily be very great. Special indebtedness to Professor C. C. Everett for his admirable illustration of the tragic forces in life is gratefully acknowledged.

SEPTEMBER, 1891.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. BOOKS AND LITERATURE,	I
II. DEFINITIONS,	5
III. SOURCES,	9
IV. AN ILLUSTRATION FROM GREECE,	15
V. AN ILLUSTRATION FROM INDIA,	19
VI. THE MATERIAL AND THE ARTIST,	24
VII. FORM IN LITERATURE,	29
VIII. PERSONALITY IN LITERATURE,	35
IX. GENIUS AND PERSONALITY,	40
X. THE RACE ELEMENT,	46
XI. PERSONALITY AND RACE,	51
XII. THE IMPRESS OF NATURE,	56
XIII. THE SPIRIT OF THE AGE—I,	63
XIV. THE SPIRIT OF THE AGE—II,	68
XV. DEVELOPMENT OF IDEA,	74
XVI. DEVELOPMENT OF FORM,	79
XVII. NATURE IN HEBREW POETRY,	85
XVIII. NATURE IN GREEK AND MEDIÆVAL THOUGHT,	96
XIX. NATURE IN ENGLISH POETRY,	97
XX. INTERNATIONAL INFLUENCES,	104
XXI. THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY,	108

CHAPTER	PAGE
XXII. LITERARY DECADENCE,	112
XXIII. AN AGE OF EXPANSION,	116
XXIV. THE SPIRITUAL ELEMENT IN LITERATURE, .	121
XXV. THE GREEK AND HEBREW TENDENCIES, .	128
XXVI. A WORD ABOUT NATURALISM—I,	131
XXVII. A WORD ABOUT NATURALISM—II, . . .	135
XXVIII. CLASSICISM AND ROMANTICISM, . . .	139
XXIX. FOLK-LORE AND LITERATURE,	143
XXX. THE EPIC,	148
XXXI. SOME MEDIÆVAL EPICS,	153
XXXII. THE DRAMA : SOURCES,	159
XXXIII. THE DRAMA : COMEDY AND TRAGEDY, .	164
XXXIV. THE LYRIC,	169
XXXV. CRITICISM : ORIGIN,	174
XXXVI. CRITICISM : DEVELOPMENT,	179
XXXVII. CRITICISM : SCOPE AND SIGNIFICANCE, .	183
XXXVIII. THE NOVEL : EVOLUTION,	188
XXXIX. THE NOVEL : SIGNIFICANCE,	193
XL. THE IMPULSE BEHIND LITERATURE, . . .	197

SHORT STUDIES IN LITERATURE.

BOOKS AND LITERATURE.

Two books are lying on my table as dissimilar in spirit, as far apart in historical conditions and personal quality, perhaps, as any two books which could be selected from a great library. At the first glance there is nothing in common between Geoffrey of Monmouth's "History of the Britons" and the prose dramas of Alfred de Musset. Paper, type, and cloth are indeed a part of each book, but these are matters of accident. The books are in different languages, they are the creations of different races, they are centuries apart in time, they are divided from each other in aim and attitude and spirit by many and deep historical movements. Geoffrey of Monmouth lived in England of the twelfth century; De Musset lived in France of the nineteenth century. One was a devout and scholarly churchman, a teacher of eminence, who died at Llandaff, after having brought back the heroic figure of Arthur from Brittany to the beautiful country which is

now touched with the traditions of the Knights of the Grail as with a mist which softens and idealizes without obscuring the objects on which it rests. The other was a brilliant, sensitive, finely imaginative nature, housed in a delicate body and immersed in the treacherous tide of Parisian activity and pleasure; a man whose will was the victim of his imagination, whose insight was often sacrificed to his temperament, and who held himself so entirely open to the impulses of his time that he became its child instead of making it his minister. Geoffrey wrote, in a purely objective spirit and in complete unconsciousness of self, the story, partly mythical and partly historic, of the British possession of England; he wrote of kings who were masters of the rough forces by which empires are formed, and he wrote also of those greater leaders upon whom the imagination plays until they grow into heroic stature and the dreams of their people become the actualities of their achievement.

De Musset, on the other hand, wrote in a spirit of intense subjectivity and with an ever-present consciousness of self; the personal life in its most delicate and sensitive relations to its environment absorbed him. Of the fathomless depths beneath him, and the great open sky above him, he seemed almost oblivious, but every change of temperature chilled him, and every passing cloud engulfed the sun for him. The uncertainty of his time, the struggle between the claims of art and the vagrant

winds of fancy playing on the passions, sapped his strength and marred his noble talent. Instead of stainless kings pursuing through the fire and storm of barbarism the ideals of a better time, he sketched with a delicate hand the familiar tragedy of our century : the young spirit losing heart in the mist of uncertainty and sinking into the arms of pleasure instead of pressing resolutely on to the heights of positive achievement ; futility and failure were finalities, not spurs, to him ; it is deeply significant that he has recalled in his exquisite manner the old Persian fancy that the rose which remained closed to the ardor of the nightingale opened its heart to the sting of the bee !

These two writers illustrate the wide divergence between books ; they bring to mind the apparently impassable abysses which separate them. At the first glance nothing seems so heterogeneous as a great library ; no creations of human skill and industry seem so entirely unrelated to each other as books. Here are the "Iliad" of Homer, the "Sakoontala" of Kalidasa, the "Kalevala" of Finland, the "Hamlet" of Shakespeare, the "Pippa Passes" of Browning, the plays of Ibsen ; they come together from the ends of the earth ; they wear garments of different cut and hue ; they speak divergent tongues ; thousands of years divide them. Have they anything in common ?

They have so many things in common that we cannot get at the heart of any one of them until

the things that unite them are far more clear and impressive to us than the things which divide them. When we bring the books of a nation together we become conscious that there is such a thing as national literature, because we perceive in them certain common qualities. When the masterpieces of the great writers stand side by side, the thought of literature as an art practiced by all the great races, as a universal activity, as a revelation of the individual soul and of the common life of men unified by certain common qualities, and bound together by deep and vital relationships, dawns upon us. It is the opportunity of most people to read many books; it might be the good fortune of many to study literature; to read books, that is, not as unrelated fragments, but as the illustrations of the greatest of the arts; the art through which the soul of man reveals itself under all historic conditions. It will be the aim of these brief chapters to point out in the most informal way some of those qualities in books which disclose their connection with each other, and to suggest some of the methods by which books may be studied in their large relations as literature.

DEFINITIONS.

THERE have been many attempts to frame a definition of literature comprehensive enough to include or suggest all that the word contains, but it cannot be said that these efforts have been successful. They have failed on the side of inadequacy ; they have been deficient rather than false. No sooner do we set out with them as tests than we come upon literary works which they fail to include or characterize. It is true of literature, as of all other great departments of achievement, that the flood of light which the larger scholarship of modern times, inspired and guided by immense additions to knowledge, has thrown upon almost all subjects has revealed very clearly the inadequacy of most of the old definitions. So long as literature was a well defined art in the hands of such critics as Boileau or of Pope, and their schools, it was readily characterized. Certain qualities of form supplied a test easily applied—a kind of folding measure which the most scantily equipped critic could carry about in his pocket. But this portable system of mensuration failed to take the dimensions of a number of notable poets, and among them Shakespeare ; and it is quite impossible to leave Shakespeare out of account in any definition of literature. One can imagine with what horror Boileau

would have looked over Carlyle—he could hardly have looked through him. Among all the literary specimens arranged with Gallic precision to illustrate the principles which ought to underlie literature, Carlyle would have found no place. Boileau would have ruthlessly excluded him from the neat, precise, and very diminutive Pantheon of which he constituted himself the custodian. And yet it is evident that Carlyle belongs to literature ; to some of us he was the first to reveal the real scope of literature.

What would Boileau have done with the “*Kalevala*,” the “*Nibelungen Lied*,” the Russian popular epics, the Scotch Ballads ? These wild, free, spontaneous growths from the soil of common life would have fared badly at the hands of a critic accustomed to the smooth elegance of the Alexandrine verse, to the orderly unfolding of the French drama, to the self-conscious, conventional, and artificial conception of art of which he made himself the mouthpiece ; and yet it is clear enough that these artless works of earlier and unknown poets are not only literature, but literature of a very significant and interesting kind. If Boileau had been living at the close of the last century, how sorely his spirit would have been tried by the interest in Hindu literature, then for the first time brought within the knowledge of Europeans ! That one should prefer the “*Sakountala*” of Kalidasa to the “*Bérénice*” of Racine would have filled him with deep and

painful perplexity. Evidently literature means a great deal more to us than it meant to Boileau ; it means so much that the task of defining it with scientific accuracy is quite beyond us. We have long ago rid ourselves of the idea that any particular form or set of forms furnishes an unfailing test of the presence or absence of the quality which constitutes literature in a book. The essential thing, so far as form is concerned, is not a reproduction of any accepted model, but the excellence which makes a form expressive of beauty or power. We must look elsewhere, then, for the elements which make the book that contains them literature. These books have the imprint of all the civilized nations on them; to their making all races have contributed. They have employed every variety of literary form, and some of them are almost formless ; they have been committed to all languages, they are of all centuries. Some of the noblest poems antedate all methods of writing, and were brought into history with the races which sang or recited them as a surviving possession of a remote and forgotten childhood.

Literature is neither confined to any particular form or forms nor limited to the illustration and exposition of any set or group of ideas or principles. All religious, political, and social creeds and ideals are to be found in its works. Every great religion has left a deep and permanent impression of itself in books ; in fact, much of the greatest literature was inspired by religion, but by religion embodied

in ideas and forms as far apart as those of the Hebrew and the Hindu, those of the Greek and the Scandinavian. Every form of political organization has its literary expression, from the early village community through oligarchy, aristocracy, kingship, and republicanism to the most radical democracy. Every social condition has left its record in books ; every conception of the family is to be found in them ; every standard of personal and public morality, and of private and public action, every ideal of life, every form of beauty which men have pursued, every stage of development through which they have passed, every experience which they have shared, every hope which they have cherished, every dream to which they have clung—all these countless aspects, conditions, stages, and facts of life are to be found reflected, described, interpreted in the books of the world. Evidently no set of ideas or principles furnishes a test of literature. And yet there are certain qualities dividing the books which are literature from those which are not. Do not the very complexity and inclusiveness of books suggest some of these qualities?

SOURCES.

THE more widely and intelligently one reads books, the more clearly does he perceive that they bring him into contact with the great facts of life as illustrated and disclosed in human experience. During many centuries, in many countries, under many conditions, men have been finding out what life is and what it means. This supreme knowledge, to which all technical and special knowledge is tributary, has not come through any one faculty or to any single class of men. It has been the distillation of a vast experience, involving the senses and the emotions no less than the intellect. Only a very small part of it has been secured by deliberate and conscious thinking; much the larger and deeper part of it has come to men and women who had no power of rationalizing it, but who could receive and retain it. Long before there were trained thinkers there were deep and beautiful thoughts of the universe; long before there was any science there was large and varied knowledge of things. Struggle with nature for sustenance, the constant additions to knowledge through daily needs, the deeper feeling about life born out of suffering, the discovery of the significance of love and faith and loyalty, and of their opposites by the fruits of each, the dawn of poetry in the imagination of untutored

men in response to the beauty of the world, the perception of the order of things and the regular recurrence of light and darkness, of seed-time and harvest, of life and death ; all these deep and vital truths and facts which go to the very heart of life were, in large measure, unconsciously learned. There is a deep and beautiful significance in this fundamental instruction of humanity ; not out of books, but at the breast of nature and by the sublime tutorship of living. We come at the very beginning on the deepest and divinest of all the facts of life : the fact that there is an intelligence, an order and a purpose behind life, of which life is the revelation to each soul which comes to the consciousness of itself. " The unconsciousness of a child is rest in God," wrote Froebel, with one of those deep and luminous glances into the mystery of things which we call prophetic. Out of this fathomless depth of knowledge and being which lies below consciousness men have slowly brought to light, through consciousness, the truths by which they live. The work of the thinkers has been vast and of incalculable importance, but it remains true, after the fullest recognition of what they have secured for human knowledge, that the deepest knowledge antedates them all. For men do not live by the knowledge of the laws of motion or of gravitation or of development or of the action of the mind ; but by love, loyalty, faith, and purity ; to these fundamental things, out of which all happiness and un-

happiness flow, all other knowledge is tributary. Neither God, the moral order, nor the hope of immortality have come into the world as the result of deliberate thinking ; and yet in these truths lie the secret and the heart of life. These truths, in one form or another, were the possession of the earliest men. They had been revealed to countless souls under the pressure of experience. The hearts of men were pressed against the terrible facts of experience as their minds were held in contact with the phenomena of nature and life, and their hands and feet were steadily adapted to tasks and journeyings ; and, as a result of this manifold and indivisible activity of the whole nature, there was reflected in their minds the world in all its aspects and life in all its relations. The germs of all truth were in the thought of the earliest men, and the work of later generations has been largely a work of expansion and clarification rather than of origination and discovery. The earliest literature discloses in fragmentary and rudimentary form the fundamental truths which are still vital and fundamental to us, and in the earliest myths prophetic foregleams of all later poetry and faith are to be found. The earliest men were in contact with God as well as with a hard material life, and there is a deep significance in what Von Ranke calls "the mystery of the primeval world, the relation of man to God and nature."

When the first artists and thinkers appeared, men who had the genius of expression and the faculty of co-ordination, there already existed a vast mass of material which needed only the touch of art to give it beauty, order, and universal significance. When the great Athenian dramatists came upon the stage, they found a whole world of poetry and knowledge lying inchoate in myth and tradition. Behind Greek life was this sublime and misty background of contact with the gods; the memory, as it were, of greater ages and a loftier race, when the sons of the gods possessed the earth, and the glory of their strength and beauty was upon it. Out of their deep experiences, out of their manifold contacts with life, out of their poetic perceptions of the splendor of the visible world, the poetic Greeks had formed, almost unconsciously, these glorious images of the deities, these noble figures of their fathers, these profound and beautiful traditions of struggle and prowess, these marvelous stories in which the mystery of the forces of nature and of her varied phenomena was illustrated or personified. The force and depth of imagination represented in such a myth as that of Dionysus, or Apollo, are quite beyond any means of measurement which we possess. These great figures seem like the survivors of submerged worlds of thought; in their beauty and profound poetic significance they recall whole generations of imaginative but inarticulate men. Such a figure as

that of Prometheus has no parentage which can be traced. Æschylus set him forever among the sublimities of art, but Æschylus was not his creator. He came from a remote past ; the child of forgotten parents ; the child, doubtless, of a vast experience of life, touched at last by the imagination, personified almost unconsciously in a great figure, which becomes distinct as it passes from hand to hand, until the conscious artist gives it final and immortal form. The same story of the unconscious creation of the material of literature may be told of all the creative races, and of most of the great literary forms. Behind the Hindu hymns and epics, the "Epic of Kings," the "Iliad" and "Odyssey," the "Nibelungen Lied," and all the other great stories of literature, there is this background of widespread imaginative activity, this universal effort to express through the imagination the results of experience. It is this vast fund, forming a kind of common capital, upon which all artists, whether with pen, brush, chisel, or uttered speech, draw. As the mists rise out of the deep seas, so do all great or beautiful or terrible ideas, which have found expression in art, rise out of this fathomless gulf of human suffering and experience. Many other and later influences inspire and develop art, but this deep spring of human experience, for the most part unconsciously acquired, and as yet only imperfectly expressed, is the original source whence literature flows in an ever widening stream.

Life is at bottom, therefore, its prime characteristic, and some kind of vitality, and some form of fidelity to the reality, or the dreams of life, must be manifest in every book that belongs to literature.

AN ILLUSTRATION FROM GREECE.

LITERATURE finds its primary impulses in experience, and its chief forms originate in popular movements, faiths, or rituals. At the beginning every art was allied with some form of life ; life and art were one at the start, and art is creative and inspiring only when it embodies some deep and vital impulse or emotion. When it becomes a matter of technical excellence, it parts with its reality and power. The evolution of the chief forms of literature is deeply interesting and significant of its functions in the development of humanity, and fortunately, the stages of that evolution are, for the most part, clearly indicated. Back of the earliest forms of literature there was widespread literary impulse, expressing itself in a great variety of forms. A wide, rich, varied knowledge of life, secured by the experience, observation, meditation of a countless multitude of persons, was the raw material of art ; it was life in unorganized form, and as such it was the possession of the many. But this knowledge once gained, this capital once accumulated, keen, sensitive, poetic minds began to reflect upon it, to organize it, to find delight in it, and, at last, to give it expression. For expression is a necessity of the soul ; a primary and universal impulse. But expression is a matter of art, and

art is the instinct and gift of a few. All who thought, felt, or acted, contributed to the original fund out of which literature was fed, but only the imaginative and creative minds could formulate this common knowledge and turn this raw material into art.

In the prehistoric periods of the great races these poetic minds were at work on the common stock of ideas, experience, and belief ; and, perhaps without intention or consciousness, the first fresh, hardy growths of literature sprang from the soil of the popular life. There were no books, no men of letters, no professional spirit, no intellectual caste ; there were here and there poetic natures, who sang as the birds sing, because the impulse was in their souls.

In the Greek literature, which is not only one of the foremost, but one of the most complete and harmonious literary expressions of a race, every principal form of the literary art can be traced directly back to the life of the people. Battle chants, religious hymns, dancing songs, wedding chorales, funeral dirges, were universal long before the appearance of the first writer of historic times. Every occupation had its set of songs, and the whole circle of domestic life had its musical accompaniment. The characteristic of this widespread literary expression was its complete unconsciousness. It took the form of poetry rather than of prose because of the natural rhythmic tendency of

an artistic race ; the tendency in the expression of any deep feeling to use the whole body as well as the voice. This early poetry was lyrical ; it was verse to be sung rather than read or recited. It was, in a word, the most direct, natural, and complete expression of the Greek life. In this way, without any consciousness of doing an artificial thing, the poetic Greek gave musical utterance to his thought and feeling. The appearance and mystery of the world imparted a deeper strain to his simple rhythmic invocation to the gods ; marriage, birth, festive days, death, furnished the themes and occasions for the expression of those joys and sorrows of which every life was made up ; the stir and bitterness of strife invoked those spirited outbursts which, later on, were to compass the loftiest emotion in the odes of Tyrtæus and Pindar ; the recurring festivals of seed-time and harvest inspired both the licentious and the religious dance and song ; for on these festive occasions the dance was part of the song. The Greek dance, like the earlier dance everywhere, was a serious and intelligent expression of thought or feeling. If it became riotous, it became so deliberately, as an expression of the Bacchic spirit. It was religious even more than social ; its movements were intended to express through motion the sentiment which the song expressed through voice and words. We have so completely lost the secret of this dance that we can no longer reproduce it, even in

the imagination ; this much, however, is certain, that it was a part, and a chief part, of a rounded and complete expression of an idea or an emotion. So close in those early days was art to life, utterance to the subject of thought and experience !

Succeeding chapters will indicate the popular origin of the great literary forms, dramatic and epic, in which the larger movements of the race in history, and its larger movements in thought, are embodied and preserved. It is sufficient here to bring out the first great fact in the study of literature : that it grew out of popular experience and was an expression of popular life.

AN ILLUSTRATION FROM INDIA.

IF the fundamental fact that literature is an expression of life needed further illustration; it might well be taken from the history of a very different race. The Hindus were defective in that artistic quality which the Greeks possessed in so rare a measure, but they were as sensitive on the side of imagination as the Hellenic race, and they possessed a deeper instinct for religion, a keener sensitiveness to the wonder and mystery of the world. Such a people will early break the silence of a rich, meditative life with voices of adoration or invocation. This is precisely what occurred in the history of the Hindus. It is now generally believed that they entered India not later than the year 3000 B. C., and that parts of their earliest known literature date back at least twenty-four centuries before the Christian era. The "Rig Veda" is one of the oldest and one of the most interesting literary monuments; it has the double interest of noble substance and eloquent form, and of a revelation of mind awakening to the wonder of things. The thousand and more hymns which it contains were composed during a period of probably not less than a thousand years, and by a great number of poets whose names, if they were ever known, have long since been forgotten. The words Rig Veda

embody a profound suggestion of the origin and character of the poems with which they are identified; for Rig means "praise," and Veda "highest knowledge." The highest knowledge or experience of men, turned to adoration and expressed in a series of sublime hymns, describes this great Hindu work: a work, not of literary intention, but of a deep, wide movement of one of the greatest races face to face with the sublime manifestations of nature before science had begun to observe or philosophy to speculate. Professor Max Müller emphasizes the popular origin of these hymns when he says: "The whole history of the world would be incomplete without this first chapter in the life of Aryan humanity which has been preserved to us in Vedic literature." The chief significance of these poems, as of the earlier poems of Greece, lies in this fact, that they preserve for us a chapter in the life of humanity.

In the case of the "Rig Veda," as in that of all old ballad and most epic literature, the poems had been handed down orally from generation to generation long before they were reduced to writing. These precious heirlooms were the intellectual treasures of families, who preserved them with sacred care. It was an immense task to carry such a vast literature in the individual memory, but it was a task for which men prepared themselves by special training.

The phrase "by heart" carries a deep suggestion

with it : the suggestion of a possession of a piece of literature in which the heart absorbs more than the mind, so that it becomes, by spiritual assimilation, a part of the very nature of the possessor. These creations of prehistoric men were expressions of their whole natures brought into contact with the great facts and forces of life. All great works of literature reveal this deep and vital quality ; this perception of the sublime order of things, not through the mind primarily, but through experience, emotion, and imagination.

The Vedic hymns were sung in the valley of the Indus centuries before the Ionic Greeks were reciting the stories of the Trojan war. They were the utterances of a universal worship before worship had become the business of priests. In these patriarchal days each family constituted a community complete in itself, and each head of a family was its priest and king. The building of an altar was a simple, universal act ; the habitual act of a religious race whose faith had not yet hardened into dogma, nor its simple, natural worship been elaborated into ritual. Beside this altar stood the head of the family in his function as a priest. The conception of religion was childlike, although not lacking sublime intimations of the great mysteries which not only encircle divinity, but enfold humanity as well. The gods are powerful and men are weak, the gods are rich and men are poor, the gods have all knowledge and men are the victims of igno-

rance ; what, therefore, shall men ask save protection from their enemies, grain from the soil and fleece from the flocks, safety from tempest and lightning and the blasting heat, full households, long life, and abundant honors ! Such are the petitions recited in these prayers, which were sung in the Indus valley by the head of the Hindu families in the earliest dawn of history. The feeding of the fire on the altar with food acceptable to the gods, the pouring of the wine on the ground, the hymn of praise, thanksgiving, and petition—could any worship be more natural or any literature issue more directly from the life of men ? These hymns are not difficult to understand, because they express primary emotions and wants, and antedate the metaphysical subtleties and vast, inorganic caprice of the imagination in which the later Hindu mind not only lost its early clearness of perception, but parted with its early artistic instinct. All men comprehended the longing of the forgotten poet who eased his soul in these fine lines :

Where there is eternal light, in the world where the sun is placed, in that immortal, imperishable world, place me, O Soma !

Where life is free, in the third heaven of heavens, where the worlds are radiant : there make me immortal !

Where wishes and desires are, where the place of the bright sun is, where there is freedom and delight : there make me immortal !

Where there is happiness and delight, where joy and pleasure reside, where the desires of our desire are attained : there make me immortal !

There are deeper notes than these purely personal solicitations in these venerable hymns ; there are spiritual aspirations, longings for communion with the divine, meditations on the wonder and pathos of human life, sublime perceptions of the depths and heights of the divine nature :

Varuna dwells in all worlds as sovereign ; indeed, the three worlds are embraced by him. The wind which resounds through the firmament is his breath. He has placed the sun in the heavens and opened a boundless path for it to traverse. He has hollowed out the channels of the rivers. It is by his wise contrivance that, though all the rivers pour out their waters into the sea, the sea is never filled. By his ordinance the moon shines in the sky, and the stars, which are visible by night, disappear on the approach of daylight. Neither the birds flying in air, nor the rivers in their ceaseless flow, can attain a knowledge of his power or his wrath. His spies behold both worlds. He himself has a thousand eyes. He perceives all hidden things that have been or shall be done.

After this fashion these poetic natures approached the gods and worshiped them, and the unaffected expression of their adoration became their earliest literature.

THE MATERIAL AND THE ARTIST.

THE same story of popular origin of literature could be told of the modern races: of the Scandinavians, whose Sagas and Eddas have furnished an inexhaustible mine of poetic material for contemporary writers from Carlyle to Wagner; of the Germanic peoples, with their "Nibelungen Lied;" of most of the Latin peoples—the French with their Roland songs, and the Spaniards with their songs of the Cid. Such an apparent exception to this general statement as that afforded by Italian literature, which began with one of the foremost poets in all literature, on closer attention confirms it. For it is with the substance of literature that we have so far concerned ourselves, and the substance of Dante's "Divine Comedy" was already existent when he came upon the stage of Florentine life. Carlyle was speaking simple truth when he called Dante "the voice of ten silent centuries." The thousand years preceding the poet's birth, in 1265, had not been entirely without voice, but they had had no intelligible and adequate expression. Here and there a voice had been heard, but its notes had been few and its utterance partial and feeble. For ten centuries men had been toiling and suffering; building states, organizing societies,

elaborating a church with its creed, ritual, and government ; evolving languages ; bearing a world of crushing burdens and doing a world of necessary, difficult, and, in the main, noble work ; but all this had gone on in silence. A deep, rich soil had accumulated ; all the conditions of a noble art-development had been secured when the first of modern writers was born in Florence. The people of Europe had lived deeply and richly ; not the less because they had lived silently. Since the great voices of the antique world had gone silent they had compassed a new and mysterious world of experience and of the knowledge which comes from experience. This raw material of art had grown so vast and rich that instinct, not yet become conscious, began to perceive its splendid possibilities and to feel its inspiration. Already there were passing from people to people those cycles of popular myth and legend which, later on, were to become a wide and significant department of literature ; already the cathedral builders were at work, and those majestic structures, in which the mystery and wonder and worship of mediævalism were to find perpetual sanctuary, were rising above many a town.

When Dante came, the time was ripe for self-expression. Europe needed but the brooding of some great poetic mind upon the material which it had created ; some mind vast enough to include its theology, its art, its politics, and its history, and

deep enough to feel the pulsations of its heart of faith. Dante recast and made this vast material his own ; gave it epic form and dramatic intensity ; set the stamp of beauty upon it ; so it remains, not only a revelation of human life, but a joy forever. It detracts nothing from his genius or his achievement to emphasize his immense indebtedness to the silent generations which had toiled and suffered that he might speak. Under the spell of his mighty voice we are likely to forget the voices whose individual notes become one vast harmony in that organ music of his which rises and sinks like a sublime accompaniment to the movement of the soul through the three worlds. The greatest difficulty in reading Dante lies in the extent and intimacy of his relation to the life and history behind and about him. One must bring the widest scholarship to the "Divine Comedy," if he would understand all its references, illustrations, incidents, and allusions ; no work is so deeply imbedded in history. Without Dante's genius the great work could not have been ; it is his in every line no less than in its vast design and its elaborate construction. But, on the other hand, the great work would not have been possible if Europe had not been meditating, acting, and suffering through ten silent centuries. It is as a revealer even more than as a creator that Dante is great ; he saw something already existent, but invisible to an imagination less penetrating and comprehensive than his own, and he gave it noble

form. This was his service, and this is the service of the great literary artists.

Shakespeare dealt even more freely than Dante with materials already existent. His first work in connection with the drama was probably the recasting and partial rewriting of the historical plays relating to Henry VI., already being acted on the rude English stage of the close of the sixteenth century. From this 'prentice work he passed, by rapid stages of growth, to the creation of those masterpieces which constitute, in many directions, the most profound and authoritative commentary on human life which we possess. These works have a beauty which belongs only to the highest poetry, and which is the incommunicable touch of Shakespeare; that touch of perfection which thrills us as with the glimpse of a new and diviner order of things. But the material upon which this great artist stamped himself was ready to his hand when he came up from Stratford to London to find a possible fortune and an undreamed-of fame in the brilliant, restless capital of Elizabethan England. With a single exception, all the plots in the Shakespearean dramas have been traced to their sources; they come from many quarters—from Greece and Rome, from Denmark and Italy, from Spain and England. Some of them were popular traditions so ancient that no man knows their origin. Such, for instance, was the origin of the story of Lear and the story of Hamlet. One who reads Shakespeare,

with the knowledge of the background of history against which all his dramas move, finds himself in constant contact with the thought and fancy of the mediæval mind, as well as with the imaginative lore and large wisdom of antiquity. The witches in "Macbeth," and the fairies in the "Midsummer Night's Dream," testify to the hold of the unbroken play of popular fancy upon the greatest imagination in literature. Shakespeare made the freest use of materials already existing when he began to write, for the reason that, as a rule, he dealt with the greatest themes, and the greatest themes have been brooded over and lighted up by the meditations of races rather than of individuals. The greater the writer, the greater his indebtedness to those nameless and numberless men and women of untrained imagination who discerned long ago the deep things of experience and gave them expression in legend, story, or song. It is only the greatest minds to whom the race stands as creditor; smaller minds borrow of their neighbors, but Dante and Shakespeare and Goethe borrowed from humanity. In these sublime transactions the race gains more than it gives; for the crude ore which it loans comes back a golden coinage, with the superscription of the kings and the stamp of that standard of values which is the test of spiritual quality and power.

FORM IN LITERATURE.

THAT Dante and Shakespeare were debtors on so large a scale to the past does not diminish the greatness and originality of their contribution to literature. No man creates power in this world, for the reason that the world is already a vast reservoir of force, and the genius of men is shown in utilizing and directing this already existent force ; in transmuting force into power by taking thought. In like manner the work of the artist is largely a work of superior insight, of higher construction, of deeper and more beautiful expression. It is not until the artist appears that we perceive the value of the material which he molds to his own uses ; it may have been long existent, successive generations may have been familiar with it, but the significance and scope of it remained unsuspected until the artist touched it with his divining-rod, and it became on the instant a revelation of human life or a splendid vision of the human soul.

It is through the artist that this crude material of thought, emotion, and experience becomes art ; or, in other words, literature. For while life realized, embodied, and interpreted is the first test of literature, some kind of perfection of construction, expression, form, is the second test. There is no

actual division of a true work of art into substance and form; the two are parts of a single whole. It is for convenience of expression solely that such a division can be made, and even for this purpose it is misleading. There is no greater fallacy than the idea that the soul and form of a great literary work are somehow separable, and that the form is in some way subordinate. Under this mistaken idea style is often discussed as something artificial, a product of skill or contrivance. This is often true of inferior writing; it is never true of literature. The form of every piece of genuine literature is as much a part of its substance as the substantial structure of trunk and the delicate network of branches are part of the tree. There is a common life back of the rose and the daffodil; it is a difference of form which gives each a beauty which is not for the eye alone, but is also a distinction of creation. What we call style is, in every true work of literature, not a part of the work, but the substance of it. Those wonderful phrases which we chance upon in Shakespeare, and which suddenly thrill us with a sense of perfection; those phrases into which the infinity and morning freshness of life are somehow distilled—these are not a part of Shakespeare; these are Shakespeare. The thought may be an old one, but this sudden flash of it into our souls is its reflection in Shakespeare's magic glass. In second-rate writers style may be, and often is, a matter of artifice; for this reason

they remain second-rate; in first-rate writers it is always a matter of instinct and character, because it is always an expression of personality, and personality is the creative principle.

In this deep and vital sense form or style is the distinctive quality of literature; that which separates it from all other forms of writing. For it must be remembered that of the great volume of past and contemporary writing only a very small part belongs to literature, and that which takes its place in this category is stamped with some perfection of form. The variety of form is very great, and the evolution of a new form is always possible. It was the fatal blunder of the old school of criticism, not that it insisted on beauty as the determining quality of literature, but on beauty of a particular kind. Thomas Rymer could discover no beauty in Shakespeare because he was willing to recognize only one order of beauty, the Classical; Wordsworth, on the other hand, can discover traces of the poetic spirit in but a single poem of Pope, because he is wedded entirely to a different ideal. It is not a fixed form, but perfection of form, which stamps literature; not one particular aspect, but the soul of beauty which inspires it. The beauty of the "Sakoon-tala" is very different from that of the "Œdipus at Colonus," and that in turn very different from "Lear," and "Lear" from "Luria"; but each of these dramas shares with the others a common greatness of idea,

and beauty and adequacy of construction and form. Between "Lycidas," the "Ode on a Grecian Urn," the "Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey," and "Wood Notes," what unlikeness and diversity of mood and form; and yet what community of power and loveliness!

The critics have not been wrong in trusting the instinct for perfection of form as the necessary and inevitable mark of literature; their mistake has been in accepting some one of many forms as the universal standard and refusing to recognize the validity and authority of other forms. So each new evolution of literary expression has been rejected, not because it was devoid of beauty or power, but because it manifested beauty and power in some new way. The "Lyrical Ballads" could never have survived the storm of adverse criticism which greeted them if they had not touched a new note in English literature and added a new perfection to its already noble performance; the work of Keats won its way in like manner, because it disclosed a depth and richness of beauty which made much of the poetry of the day pallid and dim by contrast. This will be found to be the history of the antagonism or indifference to new works of literature; it is always a contention against something the beauty of which has not been recognized because it is unfamiliar. The instinct which demands beauty of every work which claims a place in literature is sound; the insistence that the new form shall copy

the old is the folly of partial blindness attempting to do the work of perfect vision.

This quality of beauty is always the work of the artist, and it is the artist who makes literature. The crude material of thought, emotion, and experience is no more literature than the uncut marble is sculpture. All art is the work of sensitive and gifted personalities who have transmuted material into product, inorganic mass into noble pieces of construction, force into power, and crudity into that final stage which we call beauty. Detached from an artistic personality, an idea may appear as science or philosophy, but it can never appear as literature ; that which makes it literature is the stamp of the artistic nature on it. This brings out clearly the identity of form or style with literature, and makes it plain that form or style, in the vital sense, *is* literature. Take, for instance, the play of "Antony and Cleopatra" and translate it into plain narrative ; the thought remains and the story is preserved, but it has ceased to be literature ; it has become a bit of history and a series of comments or reflections, but what Shakespeare gave to it when he turned the raw material into art has vanished. That matchless music of blank verse, with faultless pause and cadence ; that glorious mastery of color and form, nowhere more evident than in this splendid poem ; that vital harmony of the elements of the story, so that character and incident seem almost identical ; that ample and varied con-

struction, large enough to include all that Rome and Egypt represented—these are the stamp of Shakespeare's personality on the old story which he doubtless read in North's translation of Plutarch, and it was this stamp which turned the old story into literature.

Through the alembic of these artistic natures, this raw material, which the whole community of men and women are constantly accumulating, is being constantly transmuted into art. The inspiration of some phase of life, and the stamp of some form of beauty, are the characteristics of all true works of literature.

PERSONALITY IN LITERATURE.

To every piece of literature humanity makes a large contribution through several channels which will be noted hereafter; the chief among them being the great and mysterious entity which we call race, and the subtle influence which we call the spirit of the age. There is also the constant and penetrating power of nature, or natural environment. But that which gives the work its stamp, as literature, is the personality of the writer. Personality is one of the greatest words in the history of the mind; the degree of clearness and completeness with which it has been comprehended by different ages and races, has furnished an infallible indication of intellectual development. Those races which have had but a partial grasp of it have halted in the march; those ages which have failed to realize it, clearly and decisively, have failed to make the highest use of the materials at hand. The supremacy of the Greeks in the arts was due, among other things, to their clear and powerful realization of the idea of personality; such a grasp of the idea as separates a man from nature, on the one hand, and from God on the other. A man must stand solidly on his own feet before he can deal intelligently with nature or with God; he must realize his own nature both in its capacity

and its responsibility. When a man comes to understand that he is a distinct creation, neither entangled in nature, after the manner of some of the older Orientals, nor absorbed in God, after the manner of the Hindus, he takes his place as a sovereign power in the world, neither the creature of matter nor the phantom of deity.

Personality is the divinest thing in the world, because it is the only creative thing ; the only power that can bring to material already existent a new idea of order and form. Through personality a divine force continually flows into the world ; through personality new revelations of human life are made and new aspects and forms of beauty disclosed. Every powerful personality is an open channel through which new truth comes among men. Nowhere is the significance of personality so evident as in art, and nowhere are its finer possibilities so widely displayed. So dependent upon personality, so bound up and identified with it, is art, that in literature a man's work approaches the very highest standard in the degree in which it expresses his personality. It must be borne in mind, however, that the word is used here in its deepest and widest sense, to express, not what is idiosyncratic and peculiar, but what is fundamental and formative in a man's nature. In this sense, personality involves and suggests temperament, imagination, artistic instinct, bent of natural power, quality, and manner of expression. A book is often said

to be full of personality which is really only idiosyncratic, or which has some strongly marked individual quality in excess. Such works as Rousseau's "Confessions," the "Sorrows of Werther," "Obermann," "The Robbers," and "Manfred," seem at the first glance to be most decisively expressive of personality; as a matter of fact, such works are very inadequate expressions of personality. They are idiosyncratic rather than stamped with personality. Goethe, in the range and greatness of his genius, is not to be found in "Werther," nor the high and beautiful talent of Schiller in "The Robbers." The complete personality of a great nature is not only concealed but misrepresented by the momentary passion, the passing mood, the intense but brief experience expressed in these crude, immature or partial works. Powerful expressions of critical moments in a man's growth, cries out of a passing anguish, outbursts of momentary feeling, are full of personality, but of a personality limited in time and experience. They are in no sense the complete and harmonious expression of the whole man. We shall not find this full and adequate outflow of a man's soul in any passionate outcry, however piercing, but in those strong, clear tones which disclose the full compass of a man's genius and the complete mastery of his resources of expression. Such writers as Byron, Leopardi, and Alfred de Musset are so intense in self-expression, so pungent and interesting, that their work, and all work like

theirs seems, at first glance, the truest and deepest expression of the man behind it. The very intensity of such work makes the calmness and restraint of the greatest works seem impersonal. But the more we study these broader and more harmonious works, the more clearly do we perceive that their repose is significant, not of self-repression, but of a free, beautiful, and unaffected self-expression. The greatest and deepest personalities are not to be found among writers of the class of Rousseau, Byron, and Leopardi, but among writers of the class of Sophocles, Shakespeare, Goethe, and Molière; among those who are often called, through an inadequate idea of the significance of personality, impersonal writers. These ripe and powerful minds have not rested in the expression of any single emotion, passion, or experience, but have compassed all experience, and made it tributary to the development of their own natures and the interpretation of universal life. "Manfred," "The Robbers," and "Queen Mab" reveal a personality limited in time or experience; a personality narrow in itself or imperfectly expressed. The true artist, the mature artist, is not driven, but inspired by his emotions; and the measure of personality is not violence of feeling or mere force of expression, but range of life and mastery of one's utterance.

In the true, deep sense, personality in literature is revealed, not in what is individualistic in feeling or expression, but in what is fundamentally dis-

tinctive and characteristic in a man's work ; in his view of life and art ; in his structural force and genius ; in the quality of his imagination ; in the depth of his insight ; in the sensitiveness of his temperament ; in the adequacy and inevitableness of his expression.

GENIUS AND PERSONALITY.

THE tendency shown by some thinkers and writers in recent days to exclude all supernatural or even mysterious elements from the problem of life manifests itself in an occasional doubt of the existence of that subtle quality of soul which we call genius. For it is to be noted that genius is a quality of soul, and not of mind only ; that it involves something more than clear perception and keen mental action. There is something in it which makes its possessor master of the secrets and hearts of his fellows ; a deep and beautiful sympathy, at the approach of which all doors are unlocked and all barriers thrown down. By no possibility could Shakespeare have known by observation all that he wrote about life and character ; a large part of it he divined. He himself could have given no account of it. And this is true of all great works of art ; there is something mysterious and inexplicable about them. In the nature of every great artist there is something incommunicable and hidden ; something which eludes all search and analysis. The definition of genius as very great labor falls to the ground the moment it is brought face to face with a great work of art. Between genius and labor, however strenuous and noble, there is a great gulf fixed ;

genius wings its highest flights by the aid of labor, but labor of itself has no power of flight. A work of talent or skill may be analyzed and resolved into its parts ; a work of genius is an indivisible whole, which betrays no signs of mechanical adaptation and adjustment. There is in every great work of literature a quality which comes from the personality of the writer, and which is, for that reason, inexplicable. What we call genius is the highest manifestation of personality ; the complete and beautiful expression of that which is distinctive and characteristic of the man.

Upon personality we can no more lay our hand than on any other vital principle. We see its manifestations clearly enough, but we never see it. Personality is evidently one of the primary things in this world, and is, therefore, unresolvable ; it is vital, and therefore not to be traced or detected or comprehended. Wherever we touch vitality—the principle of life—we touch a mystery which baffles the deepest science and hides its secret from the keenest scrutiny ; and in a human soul this mystery confronts us. There is something in us that cometh not by observation ; something sacred and inaccessible ; and the expression of this sacred and inaccessible thing is what we shall call genius. It is written that no man can see God and live, and there is something divine in us upon which we are not suffered to look ; a holy of holies from which the veil is never lifted. It is through this mysteri-

ous quality of personality that great truths come, and by it they are expressed. In every age there are powerful and controlling ideas which appear in many minds and in many works without agreement or even intimation from one to another ; for there is something behind life which is being revealed through it, and this revelation is made to and through great natures. In this sense it is strictly true that great men are inspired ; that is, breathed into by something not themselves. Call that something what we may, it is clear that it exists and communicates with men through those who, by reason of depth, range, and sensitiveness of nature, comprehend and express it. No labor can establish that subtle, inexplicable intercourse with the truth and beauty which invisibly surround us ; we can only say that it exists and that it is an affair of soul.

From the misleading definitions which ignore this deep and beautiful mystery of the soul, and so utterly fail to compass the thing they assume to define, it is wise to turn to those works in which genius has incarnated itself. Of few works of literature do we possess so full an account as of "Faust." Although planned and partly written in youth, Goethe had it in mind more than sixty years, returning to it again and again after excursions into many remote fields of interest and work. There are, it is true, in the second part of "Faust," things which have perplexed students and given

rise to no end of ingenious and, for the most part, fruitless suggestions. It is suspected with good reason that there were things which Goethe himself could explain only by taking refuge in the conventional obscurity of the Delphic oracles. But the first and greater part of this modern drama of the soul presents none of this mystery of detail, none of this mystification of complicated and world-embracing symbolism ; it is clear, coherent, dramatic. Indeed, the drama, studied as a whole, discloses the outlines of a large and penetrating thought of life.

Of the outward history of "Faust" we possess, as has been said, very full knowledge, covering a long period of years ; but of the original and fundamental conception of the work Goethe could only say that it was suddenly and completely disclosed to him. It came to him he knew not how ; he only knew that he possessed it. "They come and ask me what idea I meant to embody in my 'Faust ;' as if I knew myself and could inform them." At intervals he worked on the poem for sixty years, and yet all that he can say about the soul of it, the fundamental conception contained in it, is that one day it suddenly rose complete in his imagination. He could not explain it, because he did not originate it ; it came to him and he gave it form. And this is the story of every masterpiece of the first class. Something greater and deeper discloses itself in the work than the artist himself was con-

scious of ; it is one of the deep and suggestive facts of life that men are continually building better than they know. Could Sophocles return to-day, what a surprise would await him in the perception of the deep and vital relation of his work to the life of his race and time ! Through the vase which he carved with conscious skill a light shines not of his kindling ; through those noble dramas a truth streams not of his creating. A great actor could doubtless thrill Shakespeare with unrealized depths of passion in his own tragedies ; the greater glory to Shakespeare that a knowledge of life and mastery of the soul lay in him deeper than his consciousness. Here we come upon the deepest and most sacred element in literature ; the element of mystery which covers its contact with the truth and beauty and power that encompass and stream through human life. The poets have this knowledge in their keeping, and we may well go to one of the greatest of them for a hint of the nature of genius, of the significance of personality ; to a poet who wrote in prose, but whose vision transcends that of most of those who have written in verse. In the well-known dialogue between Socrates and Ion, Plato says :

As the Corybantic revelers, when they dance, are not in their right mind, so the lyric poets are not in their right mind when they are composing their beautiful strains ; but when falling under the power of music and meter, they are inspired and possessed ; like Bacchic maidens who draw milk and honey

from the rivers, when they are under the influence of Dionysus, but not when they are in their right mind. And the soul of the lyric poet does the same, as they themselves tell us ; for they tell us that they gather their strains from honeyed fountains out of the gardens and dells of the Muses ; thither, like the bees, they wing their way. And this is true. For the poet is a light and winged and holy thing, and there is no invention in him until he has been inspired and is out of his senses and the mind is no longer in him. . . . For in this way the God would seem to indicate to us and not allow us to doubt that these beautiful poems are not human or the work of man, but divine and the word of God ; and that the poets are only the interpreters of the gods by whom they are severally possessed.

THE RACE ELEMENT.

WHEN Shakespeare began to write plays he had a vast amount of material ready to his hand and upon which he put the stamp of art. This material, as has been said, had been accumulated in many places and by many persons. It consisted of ideas of the world and of life expressed in symbols, images, persons, legends, histories ; often very crude, sometimes already advanced in expression to a certain unity and beauty. These ideas and the expression which they took were modified by a number of influences, chief among which was that of race. This influence is discerned not only in the material, but in the artist ; not only in conceptions and ideas which Shakespeare inherited, but in Shakespeare himself. There is something in him which stamps him as an Englishman, as there is something in Dante which stamps him as an Italian, and something in Molière which stamps him as a Frenchman. So clear and distinct are these marks of race that they constitute a set of distinctions in themselves, so patent and so generally recognized that when we speak of German literature, for instance, we think at once not only of a great group of books, but of certain characteristics which they possess in common. The drama of Spain, with its lofty eloquence of idea and diction and its wonderful beauty

of episode, is a very different creation from the drama of England, with its tragic effectiveness, its large construction, its subordination of parts to dramatic completeness ; both dramas being expressions of the same impulse, and part of the same literary movement. The drama of France, which belongs to the same general movement, marks a still greater divergence of spirit and method, and takes on a classic form instead of illustrating the romantic spirit of Spain and England. These racial differences are noticeable in every literary epoch, and are peculiarly striking in periods of great activity, like the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and a part of the nineteenth century. Tolstoï is unmistakably a Slav, Balzac a Frenchman, and Carlyle a Scotchman. Genius, which is a universal quality, seems to emphasize temperament, which is mainly a race quality.

It is true, in the deepest sense, that, as Wordsworth has said, "heaven lies about us in our infancy "; it is also true that we begin life with an immense human inheritance. This vast capital, which preceding generations have accumulated, is not invested for but in us. Our ancestors live in us, and we lived in them. The race stands for continuity of life, for unbroken historic activity, for uninterrupted assimilation of knowledge and experience. In a very true sense immortality is behind as well as before us ; we have lived as truly as we shall live. The story of the past, as we read it in books, is not a remote and

alien record of events ; it is part of our biography. People of English descent are what they are because English history has been what it has been. The wars of the Roses, the stir of the Renaissance, the intense and painful struggles of the seventeenth century, the political and commercial expansion of the eighteenth century, the varying phases of history on this continent, are as much a part of the complete story of our being as the events which we have seen with our own eyes. Our complete personal history antedates all the centuries of which record has been kept. There is a sense in which no human condition presents any element of novelty to us ; at some time we have known it. The life of nomadic tribes, the solitude of the woods, the tumult of the sea, the roar of cities—how readily we adapt ourselves to these varying conditions ! There was a time when we dwelt in the deep woods, when we sailed the great seas, when we made the long migration from the far East to these Western lands. In this vast school of life we have studied, not for a few brief terms, but for uncounted centuries. From the beginning we have been striving, seeking, suffering, learning. All this we have done through that mysterious entity which we call race ; that unbroken line of generations stretching back to the remotest past, with a common memory, a common history, and a common consciousness. It is this unbroken companionship with all previous times which makes us in very truth “the heirs of all the ages.”

The deep significance of this fact of race is to be found in the continuity of consciousness which it preserves, the cumulative force of trained instinct and habit which it develops, the deep and abiding educational result which it implies. Climate, sky, soil, occupation, physical environment, have acted upon generation after generation of Englishmen until a distinct type of man has been produced. The individual man is not lost in the larger history into which his biography merges ; he is explained and interpreted by it. Without it he is a leaf torn from a book, a tree uprooted from the soil. We could not understand Homer, Marlowe, or Cervantes if the history of the Greeks, the English, and the Spanish had perished. The full scope of personality, the fundamental fact and force in literature, is comprehended only when we realize the full meaning of race solidarity. It is the race which makes the highly individualized life possible ; it is the accumulation of knowledge and experience in the long training of instinct and nature which makes it possible for a man to detach himself from close contact with his generation and live his own life. Men of this temper, like Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius, and Emerson, are always members of highly developed races ; they are able "to set up for themselves " because they have inherited so much. The race and the individual are our chief concern in the study of literature, and neither is comprehensible apart from the other. We do

not exalt the individual when we minimize his indebtedness to his race ; we reduce his stature by lowering the base on which he stands. On the other hand, we do not increase the significance of race by diminishing the part of individualism on the stage of history ; we lessen it by impoverishing the sources of its influence.

PERSONALITY AND RACE.

THERE can be no complete answer to the question of the origin of the peculiar qualities which give each race its specific character. There are racial differences which remain entirely unexplained, and which are likely to remain so. The Hebrew belonged, for instance, to a family of peoples from whom he seems to differ not superficially, but fundamentally, when he first appears in history. With natural surroundings not radically different from those which made the physical environment of his fellow-peoples, he stands in idea and mental character as remote from them as if separated by seas and continents. It is true that the historical conditions which marked his development were peculiar, but they were peculiar because his genius made them so ; the peculiarity lay not in them, but in his interpretation and use of them. It was the Hebrew genius on the spiritual side which gave Hebrew history its unique quality and character. Whence came this genius, this spiritual receptivity and instinct ? To answer this question we must unveil what Von Ranke calls "the mystery of the primeval world, the relation of man to God and nature." We discover clearly enough the modifications of racial life and expression, but we cannot account for racial genius—that quality

which determines the attitude of a race toward nature and furnishes the selective principle which leads it to receive certain sides of truth from its experience and discard others. But though we cannot trace the origin of some notable characteristics of race, we can clearly discern their impress on race history, their widening application to every form of activity and expression, their permanent influence on institutions and character. The course of development is not difficult to trace. Each race begins its race life, apparently, with some peculiar aptitude or genius which, like the selective principle in plants, appropriates that which is akin to it and which is needed for its development. At once a number of shaping influences are brought to bear on it. There begin the education and modification produced by contact with its natural environment; then comes that large experience which we call history, events combining with physical position and occupations to repress certain traits and to emphasize others—making of one race sailors, of another tillers of the soil, of another merchants. Religious ideas and practices may be developed by a race, or, as in many cases, be brought from afar. In either case they take on rapidly the characteristics of the race mind and temperament. The organization of the family and state complete and embody in institutions and in an historical development the race conceptions of social and political relations. All these creations of a race become in

turn sources of influence, and react upon the race and upon each other until a race character is compounded of all these influences and yet harmonized by the distinctive race genius—that assimilating and constructive instinct which impels the Hebrew to seek and to illustrate the moral, the Greek the artistic, and the Roman the organic principle in history.

Into this deep, rich, and influential inheritance of many-sided experience and activity every member of a race is born ; through the race consciousness which he shares he is in living relation with the most remote events ; an entire historic life is summarized and incarnated in him. A Hebrew, he feels as by instinct his affinity with the side of life with which his race has been dealing ; a Greek, he is under the spell of the beauty which has been the long possession of his kindred ; a Roman, he turns to the world-wide organization of society ; an Arab, he needs no instruction in the secrets of nomadic life ; an American, he starts with a political education begun centuries ago beside the distant North Sea. Life and the world are never entirely new to any man ; he determines for himself his attitude toward them, and works out his own thought about them ; but he does not bring a neutral mind to the task, he brings the mind which his race has furnished with a set of ideas, and upon which it has stamped certain strong tendencies. He may rebel against the ideas and institutions of his race, but

he always starts with them; if he finally rejects them, he cannot reject the subtle influence which they have exerted upon his nature. The race is the reservoir of history to the individual. To reject that which his race bequeathed to a man, if such a thing were possible, would be to return to the rudimentary stages of growth and to attempt to compass in one short life the vast movement of history. To hold one's self in harmony with one's race, while working out one's personal gift with freedom and conviction, is to combine the highest results of inheritance and personal endeavor.

This is the peculiar fortune of great writers; they keep the strength of their race without any sacrifice of individuality. Cervantes uses all that Spain has been and done. He understands his race so completely on its noble and its humorous sides that he stands as its interpreter. The lofty idealism of its higher classes become conventional and extravagant, and the wisdom of its common people, distilled in a thousand proverbs, are harmonized in "Don Quixote," in a work which is at the same instant instinct with the genius of Cervantes and Spanish to the core. Emerson is one of the most individualistic of the writers of the New World, but he is also the most American of them all. His own personality is so strongly marked that he seems to stand apart by himself, but in every line one reads the secret of the racial, religious, intellectual, and political conditions which pre-

ceded and surrounded him. If he deals with the "Republic" of Plato, he brings to it an unquestioning faith in the sovereignty of man as man which the old Greek would find it hard to understand ; if he meditates on the mysticism of the Orient, it is with a sense of personality so keen and indestructible that he gives the old dream of the brooding East a new and modern interpretation.

These race marks are in every literature and in every great writer. The same tendency shared by men of different races takes on different expressions. The idealism of Spenser is far removed from that of Novalis and the German Romanticists, from that of Chateaubriand and the French sentimentalists. The Elizabethan dramatists disclose a temper and method very different from those of Calderon and Lope de Vega, from those of Corneille and Racine, from those of Lessing and Schiller. Every great work of literature has behind it a background of race experience and history. No individual life is deep and comprehensive enough to produce a great book ; the life of a race must be behind it—all the dim instincts working themselves up into intelligence, all the vast historic contact with the world and time assimilated, rationalized, and become articulate.

THE IMPRESS OF NATURE.

ONE of the most obvious influences reflected in literature is the character of the natural or physical environment of a people. There is a deep truth in those fine lines from Landor's "Hellenics":

We are what suns and winds and waters make us ;
The mountains are our spongers, and the rills
Fashion and win their nursling with their smiles.

The mysterious ebb and flow of the Nile, bringing fertility with its widening waters ; the vast, monotonous steppes of Russia ; the soft skies, the clear air, the blue sea flashing about the coasts of Greece ; the death-like winters and bitter cold of Scandinavia ; the verdure, the misty heavens, the sea-girt isolation of England, have all left their distinct marks on the literatures of these various lands. Men have described nature as they saw it : and Hesiod in Bœotia, Theocritus in Sicily, Wordsworth in England, and Emerson in America disclose the difference of their surroundings in their different attitudes toward Nature and in the differences of phenomena and aspect which arrested their attention. There has been a notable development of companionship between man and Nature on the æsthetic and intellectual sides ; each nation has had its own thought about this matter, and that thought has changed from age to age.

The oldest mythologies reveal very profound ideas of Nature as reflecting the thought and overflowing with the life of deity ; the older East fastening its mind on those processes of Nature in birth, decay and death, in seed, flower, and fruit, in recurring seed-time and harvest, in the change and succession of seasons, which are most significant and mysterious ; while Greece, with its keen sense of beauty, caught as in a magic mirror the beautiful, changing aspects of sky and sea and olive-crowned hill. During the long dream of the Middle Ages, with so imperfect a sense of personality, Nature ceased to have deep poetic and spiritual meaning for men ; ceased, indeed, to enter into their lives. Petrarch was the first modern man to show any interest in Nature. In England it is in Gray's letters that we come upon the first perception of the beauty of wild mountain scenery.

Aside from this varying influence of Nature directly exerted upon literature, there is a more constant and pervasive power revealed in national occupations, habits, and temper of mind. It must be remembered that, in addition to the appeal which Nature is always making to the imagination, it is Nature which furnishes the conditions of man's physical life. The first work of a people has always been that of adaptation to physical environment, and in the vast and determining differences of this environment we recognize the source of the most obvious differences between races ; those

differences which force themselves upon the eye because they discover their presence in all the external habits of life. One notes at a glance the differences between the Arabs living for centuries under a burning sky and amid vast stretches of desert, and the Scandinavian peoples filling their brief summers with intense toil in order that life may be sustained during the long and bitter winter; one detects without the aid of ethnology the wide divergence of physique and mental habit between the Hindu in the valley of the Indus and the Hollander on the low, dike-encircled lands at the mouth of the Rhine. These racial differences harmonize so perfectly with the different conditions of physical environment that the relation of cause and effect is not so much inferred by as forced upon the mind. Men do not get their faculties from Nature, but to her they owe a large part of their training. Each race seems to possess an assimilating principle of its own, but that which it appropriates modifies its racial character, and acts and reacts upon it until it becomes a part of that character.

This training of men is the greatest factor in civilization, and Nature plays the greatest part in it. From Nature men have received their deepest lessons. From the order of parts and harmony of movement in Nature came the idea of law, by the aid of which we are able to comprehend the visible universe, and to conceive the invisible world of

moral and intellectual activity; from the varied aspects of Nature was developed the perception of beauty as a finer side of truth; from direct contact with Nature in field and mine, on land and sea, through agriculture, navigation, the applied sciences, came the accumulation of knowledge which we call science, and the vast inheritance which the labor of the past has bequeathed to us. Civilization is the joint product of man and Nature; Nature furnishing the power which man applies, revealing the processes which man reproduces by mechanical skill, and furnishing the materials which man uses in every visible form through which his invisible soul expresses itself. Man changes the landscape, and Nature changes man. Differences of climate involve differences of habit and occupation, and, after a time, differences of physical type; the tropics, the temperate zone, and the arctic circle compel conformity of habit to the conditions they impose. Men make themselves masters of Nature not by resisting but by conforming to her demands, and the constant tendency is toward a more complete adaptation to the physical environment. After a long period of time this adaptation produces the widest and most lasting racial differences. Says Taine:

Though we can follow but obscurely the Aryan peoples from their common fatherland to their final settlements, we can yet assert that the profound differences which are manifest between the German races on the one side, and the Greek and Latin on

the other, arise, for the most part, from the differences between the countries in which they were settled : some in moist lands, deep in rugged marshy forests, or on the shores of a wild ocean ; beset by melancholy or violent sensations, prone to drunkenness and gluttony, bent on a fighting, blood-spilling life ; others, again, within the loveliest landscapes, on a bright and pleasant sea-coast, enticed to navigation and commerce, exempt from gross cravings of the stomach, inclined from the beginning to social ways, to a settled organization of the state, to feelings and dispositions such as develop the art of oratory, the talent for enjoyment, the invention of science, letters, arts.

An influence which at the start is purely physical becomes after a time intellectual and spiritual, for man's nature is indivisible, and that which affects a part affects the whole. Life on the sea-coast stimulates the daring, roving, commercial impulses, and brings into prominence the mental and moral qualities which accompany such a development. The adventurous navigator gets a hardy frame, a cool mind, a resolute spirit, a ready command of all his resources. The English in the Baltic Sea provinces took to water as to their natural element ; they swarmed around the British coast ; they turned their seamanship to good purpose when they became masters of an island which, while it attached them to itself as with cords of steel, constantly tempted them to spread sail and make a common account of business and adventure ; centuries afterward they disclosed the moral and physical training of their dealing with the sea in their world-wide competition with Spain ; and in modern

history English seamanship has secured English primacy of commerce. This long contact with the physical environment of island life has developed a strong aggressive character, alive to the chances of conquest and power, delighting in responsibilities, with a notable genius for organization and administration. Such a racial character or temper works itself out on all sides; it deals with political questions, with philosophy, science, art, and religion, and in each department its decisiveness, courage, and strong practical sense are manifest. Concerned only in a subordinate way with speculative matters, it concentrates its strength on governing in a practical fashion, and on securing the fruits of the tree of knowledge, content that its roots should be nourished in German soil. Poets of vigorous understanding like Ben Jonson, Dryden, and Dr. Johnson represent it on the side of its limitations, while its poets of the highest genius are protected by a strain of manly realism, so that, while Shakespeare comprehends and loves both Hamlet and Romeo, his own character, in its poise and self-mastery, discovers its kinship with Horatio and Henry V.

In long periods of time physical qualities are transmuted into moral and intellectual qualities, and as one set of questions after another comes up for settlement, these qualities, entering into every such solution, are translated out of personal into national life, and become historic and institutional. First,

the necessity of conforming to physical conditions in order to preserve and sustain life ; then, the development of mental and moral aptitudes and characteristics in harmony with these surroundings ; then, the application of these qualities to social, political, religious, and artistic opportunities, and their gradual expression in institutions, habits, and history ; this has been a great part of the story of every race—the part taken by Nature. The Assyrian on his rich, monotonous plain ; the Egyptian beside his mysterious, fruitful river ; the Greek under his serene sky and encircled by his sunny sea ; the Northman on the borders of the arctic circle, and the Moor under semi-tropic suns—each of these differently conditioned races has reflected in character and achievement these varying physical conditions, and in the literature of each race these diverse external fortunes and internal traits are clearly revealed. In this subtle and mysterious fashion, to be understood only when one sees in imagination the entirety of national life and growth, does Nature enter into and modify the life of men and so contribute to and leave a mighty impress upon literature.

THE SPIRIT OF THE AGE.—I.

IN his twenty-seventh year Alfred de Musset wrote his "Confession d'un Enfant du Siècle," in which his highly wrought prose runs at times perilously near the verge of bathos in the endeavor to press the idea of self-abandonment to passion to its ultimate expression. In describing himself as "the child of the age" the brilliant young poet, of whom Heine said that "the Muse of Comedy kissed him on the lips, but the Muse of Tragedy on the heart," meant to emphasize the depth of the impression which his own time had made upon him. Compounded as he was of fire and sensibility, exquisitely sensitive to the influence of the moment, whether it be the sudden perception of an ideal or the ravishing grace of the woman upon whom his vagrant fancy had settled for an instant, his mood responded to the spirit of his age as the string responds to the wind that breathes across it. A genius, at once so delicate and so dependent, will express itself at one time with a beautiful impulsiveness, and at another time with an appealing pathos; but it will never compass a vast range of life, nor discover great constructive energy. Born in a prosaic age, it will produce little, though that little may be of the highest quality; born in a poetic age, it will respond to a thousand influences

and sing in many tones ; but even under the highest stimulus there will be no master tones—those tones which make a music of their own. If such a genius falls upon a fortunate time, it will reveal a quality so rare and fine that every expression of itself will bear the stamp of distinction, but the sum of all its work will reveal a variety of influences struggling with or succeeding one another, not a sovereign influence shaping and harmonizing life. If one note recurs more frequently than another, it will be, as in De Musset, the note of weariness, satiety, and despair. To be the child of the age is to feel its pangs and miss its higher inspirations.

There is another class of minds, very different from that to which De Musset belongs, who are in large measure dependent upon their times. There are natures clear in insight, strong in conviction, steadfast in self-control, who lack the impulse of expression in a strong way, and who depend upon the general impulse of their time for motive power ; natures which have great reserves of thought and emotion, which are never brought into action because the inward impulse is feeble and the outward impulse fails to supplement it. It is noticeable that, in periods of great poetic productiveness, there is often found a group of writers perceptibly lower in rank than their great contemporaries, but whose range of emotion and melody of phrase entitle them to high position. To those who study them closely these singers discover a distinct reflex

influence from their leaders ; with such gifts as theirs, and with their sensitiveness, they have happily fallen upon times of tumultuous energy and motivity, and they are swept onward by a universal tide. Fallen upon less inspiring times, these melodious voices would be silent, or faint and uncertain. Perhaps the best English example of a really gifted nature, weak on the side of motivity and fallen upon prosaic times, is that of Gray. Mr. Arnold has quoted a phrase from a letter of the Master of Pembroke Hall at Cambridge, Gray's friend and executor, as significant of the poet's life : "Everything is now dark and melancholy in Mr. Gray's room ; not a trace of him remains there ; it looks as if it had been for some time uninhabited, and the room bespoke for another inhabitant. The thoughts I have of him will last, and will be useful to me, the few years I can expect to live. He never spoke out, but I believe, from some little expressions I now remember to have dropped from him, that for some time past he thought himself nearer his end than those about him apprehended." He never spoke out ! "In these four words," says Mr. Arnold, "is contained the whole history of Gray, both as a man and as a poet." Gray was one of the foremost scholars of his time ; more than this, he was a man of deep and genuine culture. In many respects his position was favorable to work ; he had solitude, books, the atmosphere of a university town, freedom from pressing cares, detach-

ment from affairs. He had very high standards and an open mind ; he could not be deceived as to the quality of his work, and he felt and expressed the deeper view of nature which was later to add a new and noble strain to English verse. No one can read the "Elegy" without feeling the beautiful quality of the poet's genius and the perfect sense of form which went with it, and no one can read the "Odes," especially if he bears in mind the literary period in which they were written, without becoming conscious of the originality and picturesque power of the poet. Why, then, with so many favorable conditions did Gray produce so little? The chief condition was unfavorable ; the spirit of the age was alien to his genius. He was a poet of great gifts and defective impulse fallen upon a prosaic time. The atmosphere he breathed, instead of vitalizing, debilitated him. Nobly endowed, and richly furnished with knowledge, he lacked motivity, and the age was against him. "If I do not write much," he said to Horace Walpole, "it is because I cannot." The age was bent upon the making of prose, and Gray, who had the soul of a great poet, sustained his ideals and put the stamp of a lofty soul on his work, but he could not utter himself freely and naturally. He was born out of time, and he never spoke out !

Alfred de Musset illustrates the impress of the time on a nature sensitive, responsive, and passionate rather than creative, self-directed, and en-

dowed with deep insight ; Gray, on the other hand, the influence of the time on a well poised, clear-sighted but shrinking nature, full of possibilities of power, but lacking the inward impulse. The spirit of the age was the chief inspiration of the one, and hence the limitation of his vision ; the spirit of the age was the hindrance of the other, and hence the small volume of his work.

THE SPIRIT OF THE AGE.—II.

SCHILLER has stated the relation of great, original minds to the spirit of the age in which they live in these words : “ The artist, it is true, is the son of his time ; but pity for him if he be its pupil, or even its favorite ! Let some beneficent divinity snatch him, when a suckling, from the breast of his mother, and nurse him with the milk of a better time, that he may ripen to his full stature beneath a distant Grecian sky. And having grown to manhood, let him return, a foreign shape, into his century ; not, however, to delight it by his presence, but dreadful, like the son of Agamemnon, to purify it.” Schiller himself, with his pure, high genius, well illustrates the identification of a man of genius with his age, and at the same time his detachment from it. Upon every such mind the Time Spirit is a powerful influence, but the Eternal Spirit is the source of its inspiration. To express some part or aspect of absolute truth in the speech of the day, is the task of all who express themselves powerfully through art ; the truth does not belong to the time, because truth is for all time ; but the form which it shall take, the language through which it shall find expression, are largely imposed upon the artist by the age in which he lives.

Milton is, perhaps, the best English example of a

powerful, original, and virile mind, modified in expression by the spirit of the age. He possessed in uncommon measure the clearness and fervor of conviction, the constant moral insight, the fixity of purpose, and the strenuousness of nature denied to De Musset ; he was strong in the inward impulse, the self-sustaining power, denied to Gray ; he was a resolute, solitary, creative man, who in any age would have illustrated Schiller's idea of a poet's relation to his time. In any century he would have been both the son and the mentor of his time. For not only is the impress of his time distinctly visible in Milton's work, but the successive stages of that time are recorded there. On this massive, isolated spirit, the age stamped itself as distinctly as on the spirit of De Musset, but in a very different fashion. The great struggle of the seventeenth century in England was not simply reflected by Milton ; it suggested to a nature congenial with its aims and ideals themes kindred to the poet's soul and deeply expressive of his time. Milton was the last of the great spirits of the English Renaissance ; with him ends the splendid outburst of the imagination which began with Surrey and Wyatt. During the first thirty years of his life he was under the spell of the Renaissance spirit ; the spirit of freedom, of joy in life for the sake of activity, rather than for mere pleasure, of a noble harmony of truth with beauty. This was the period of Milton's purest poetic activity ; the activity which finds its

impulse in self-expression and sings out of sheer fullness of heart. In these years were written the "Hymn on the Nativity," "L'Allegro," "Il Penseroso," "Lycidas," the fragments of the "Arcades," and the masque of "Comus." These pieces have a noble beauty, a mingled majesty and loveliness, which to not a few lovers of the poet reveal his genius at the moment of most perfect expression. When Sir Henry Wotton, a man of finest discernment and no mean poet, read the "Comus," he characterized it, in a letter to Milton, as "a dainty piece of entertainment, wherein I should much commend the tragical part if the lyrical did not ravish me with a certain Doric delicacy in your songs and odes; whereunto I must plainly confess to have seen yet nothing parallel in our language." The freshness and originality of beauty of Milton's work of this period can be appreciated by those alone who are familiar with earlier and contemporary English versification; and there are many who regard the "Comus" as the poet's finest and truest work; the work most perfectly illustrative of the highest qualities of his genius.

But these studious and peaceful years of youth were ended with the civil war which called Milton home from Italy and made him, in a sense, the servant of a party instead of the prophet of a truth. For twenty years he was in the stormy atmosphere of the Puritan revolution, and the pen that had written the matchless song to "Sabrina fair" was

concerned mainly with fierce, rancorous, often brutal polemics. How many of these pamphlets we should be glad to detach from the great name of Milton ! Then came the overturning of the Restoration, the disappearance of the Puritan dream of government, and the seclusion of the poet from active life. Once more the imagination was free of wing, and the great theme that had been nourished through the storm of years, that had grown clear and expanded in majestic symmetry in that mighty stir of conviction and emotion, became the epic of "Paradise Lost." The great work and its companion work accomplished, the poet, old, blind, and fallen upon evil times, told the story of his own old age in "Samson Agonistes." At every stage the spirit of the age is traceable ; indeed, every decade may be said to have left its mark ; and yet of all English poets Milton was, in some sense, the most detached and solitary !

Milton was a man of intense moral nature, and of lofty and massive mind ; in any age he would have been serious, earnest, and of a religious temper. The spirit of his age at first fostered and emphasized the poet's natural traits and qualities ; so near was he for a time to that spirit that he became its pupil and servant, and so fell from his estate of poet to the very disastrous and demoralizing drudgery of a partisan. But when the spirit of the age, as it touched this essentially great soul, changed, he remained steadfast. He had once been

stimulated into compliant expression of the passion of the hour ; he was now inspired by opposition to illustrate ideas of life in sublime antagonism to those which had become triumphant about him. For the spirit of the age works in many ways, and those who oppose it owe no less to it than those who move with it. Carlyle illustrates this complex influence of the spirit of the time quite as impressively as Milton, with whom, as with Cromwell, he had a certain kinship of nature.

A great writer must have some share of universal truth, some great thought which depends in no sense upon his own time ; but for the form which that truth shall take the greatest must depend upon his age. He cannot write with the amplitude and splendor of Shakespeare before Shakespeare's time, because the language is not ready for him ; he cannot state the principles of criticism clearly and logically before Dryden's time, because English prose has not yet been fashioned to do his work. Born in the tenth century, the poet cannot express the mighty life of the sixteenth century ; nor plunged in the fierce strife of the seventeenth century can he know the breadth of view and tolerance of spirit of the nineteenth century. Each age has its spirit ; there is some truth which it illustrates and emphasizes above all other truths, some lesson which it teaches, or some aspect of life which it brings into clear light. The spirit of the age may be progressive or reactionary ; the fact remains

that, whatever its character, it is one of the shaping influences in the forming of great minds. It will inspire a Shelley and a Newman, a radical and a reactionary, at the same moment. In one age it will use the drama and in another the novel. In Dickens, Gogol, Daudet, Valdes, he who runs may read the spirit of his time. To be immersed in it, to be penetrated by it, to comprehend and express it, is part of the function of every great artist ; to hold up beside it universal truth, and make the brief hour of time tributary to and significant of eternity, is the whole of his work. Thus he is at once the son of his time and its master.

DEVELOPMENT OF IDEAS.

“PEOPLE are always talking about originality,” said Goethe, “but what do they mean? As soon as we are born, the world begins to work upon us, and this goes on to the end. And, after all, what can we call our own except energy, strength, and will? If I could give an account of all that I owe to great predecessors and contemporaries, there would be but a small balance in my favor.” These words of Goethe, at the same time one of the most original and one of the most cultivated of modern minds—a man of the greatest natural force, and a man who made the most of all that his time could give him—emphasize the two chief sources of literature: the man and the combined influences that shape and modify him. A great writer must always be *in* his age, but never entirely *of* it; he must preserve and utilize the genius and temper of his race, but he must subordinate them to his own personality; he must understand the spirit of his time and yet remain its master. The personality of the writer as the medium of a fresh revelation of truth, power, and beauty from the divine sources of these things; nature; racial training, and character; the special tendency and spirit of the age—these are the elements of which every great literary work is compounded.

That literature is in very considerable measure conditioned by the moral and intellectual development of the age and race which create it involves no diminution of its authority or its originality. On the contrary, literature is most significant and impressive when it gives us the very form and pressure of a time and race ; when, as in the Greek theater or the theater of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, we feel the full tide of national life. That literature is thus conditioned is clear enough, not only on the grounds that have already been traversed—the evident impress of these influences on great works and great writers—but also by reason of the presence of decisive evidence of a process of development. The ideas which are illustrated in the literature of each age are the ideas which denominated that age, and the introduction of a new conception in art means the dawning of a new conception in the general mind of the time. A history of thought might be written from the materials which literature affords ; so completely does it contain the mind of succeeding periods. As that mind has expanded under the power of larger ideas, the conceptions expressed in literature reveal a corresponding expansion. One of the most impressive illustrations of the dependence of literature on the thought of the time, and of the correlative fact that art catches the first glow of another and larger conception of things, is found in the Book of Job, one of the deepest and most sublime

poems in the literature of the world. In this work, in a form of noble dramatic effectiveness, a great and significant transition of thought is developed ; the change from one conception of some of the deepest things in life to another is brought out in the very process. Instead of a picture of a dead past, we have a leaf torn from the living present. Job, the protagonist of this drama of the soul, is shown opposing, with a conviction which deepens as the debate proceeds, the old Hebrew idea that life, as we see it, represents an exact reward of righteousness and punishment of sin, and that the extent of a man's calamities is the measure of his sinfulness. " You suffer ; *therefore* you must have sinned," is the consolation which the expounders of the current wisdom of their time offer this sorely oppressed soul. Conscious of his own rectitude, and with the simplicity of an untroubled conscience, Job denies the fact, the inference and, finally, the philosophy. " It is not true," he says ; " it is false to life and to truth. The wicked shall surely be punished, but, so far as we see, he prospers and the righteous suffers. There must be some other explanation of the mystery of suffering." As the debate proceeds, Job sees, with steadily clearing intelligence, the inadequacy of the current interpretation. He does not reach another view, but he is persuaded that misery and suffering have other origins than sin, and that punishment is not their sole function. An old and universally accepted in-

terpretation of one great group of facts in human life is shown in conflict with a new and higher idea ; and the poem closes with a new and sublime element in the onrushing storm and the new and still larger truth that speaks from the heart of it, that the life of man has a reach and depth beyond all present comprehension, and that the mysteries must remain mysteries because their explanation involves a fullness of knowledge not attainable under the conditions of human life. The current wisdom becomes sounding brass and cymbal in the presence of the awful range of divine purpose and creation, and Job's venturous thought has sublime confirmation. Here, then, is a chapter out of the story of the development of human thought, the poem being conditioned on that evolution.

Much the greater part of the influential thinking of antiquity was under the dominion of the family or clan idea. The family or the clan, which was the enlargement of the family, was regarded as the unit of society ; there was no clear or true idea of the place of the individual. Around the clan idea was built up the conception of human relationship to God, and of that relationship as embodied in organized society. There was only a rudimentary thought of personal responsibility, of personal immortality, of reward and retribution as applied to individuals. The conceptions of responsibility, ownership, obligation, reward, and crime were impersonal, and were, therefore, the very reverse of

our own conception of these things. The old Testament is full of this conception of the family as the unit of society, and the great ethical teaching of the Greek theater was the doctrine of corporate responsibility and punishment, the curse descending from generation to generation until the original offense was expiated. Such ideas as these are only primarily religious and political; they so penetrate life that, when art begins to reproduce life, they appear as furnishing the great motives and, in a sense, dictating the interpretation which art impresses upon life. Æschylus, like every great mind, was in advance of his time, but he could not bridge the gulf of years and compass the Shakespearean idea of personality and character; he was bound by the intellectual development of his age and race, and his work was conditioned by that development.

DEVELOPMENT OF FORM.

THAT literary style is, to a certain extent, conditioned by the evolution of language, construction, and grammar is evident to the student of any literature. Homer's genius was distinctly narrative, and found its natural expression in the epic form ; but had it been dramatic it could not have given us the compass, order, and noble completeness of the drama of later years. A long sustained evolution of Greek thought and life, a gradual development of the drama as a literary form, were the stages essentially preparatory to the magnificent work of Æschylus and Sophocles. Boccaccio was a storyteller of the highest rank, and a master of style ; but Boccaccio could not have written a novel of the modern type. It was necessary that the picaresque novel of Spain and the old mediæval romance should be united to form the character novel of our time. And behind this character novel lies not only a long period of evolution in the matter of form, but one of the deepest chapters in the history of human thought. An illustration of the partial dependence of a writer upon the stage of literary development with which his life is contemporaneous, is furnished by a glance at three writers of English prose.

The "Voiage and Travaile" of Sir John Man-

deville was written about the middle of the fourteenth century. The sharp limitations imposed upon Sir John by the condition of English prose in the time in which he wrote are seen in this brief extract from a well-known passage :

And zee schulle undirstonde, that no man that is mortelle, ne may not approchen to that Paradys. For be Londe no man may go for wylde bestes, that ben in the Desertes, and for the highe Mountaynes and gret huge Roches, that no man may passe by, for the derke places that ben there, and that manye. And be the Ryveres may no man go ; for the watre rennethe so rudely and so scharply, because that it comethe doun so outrageously from the highe places aboven, that it rennethe in so grete Wawes, that no Schipp may not rowe ne seyle azenes it : and the Watre rorethe so, and maketh so huge noyse, and so grete tempest, that no man may here other in the Schipp, thoughe he cryed with alle the craft that he cowde, in the hyeste voys that he myghte. Many grete Lordes han assayed with grete wille many tymes for to passen by the Ryveres toward Paradys, with fulle grete Companyes : but thei myghte not speden in hire Voiage ; and manye dyeden for werynesse of rowynge azenst the strong Wawes ; and many of hem becamen blynde, and many deve, for the noyse of the Watre ; and some weren perrisscht and loste, with inne the Wawes : So that no mortelle man may approche to that place, with outen specyalle grace of God.

Sir Thomas Malory's "*Morte d'Arthure*" was written in the middle of the next century and printed by Caxton in 1485. It was a compilation, and it bears the stamp of the translator's familiarity with French. The spirit of Walter Map in dealing with the poetic Celtic traditions

of Arthur is preserved and continued, but the style discloses an immense gain in freedom, flexibility, beauty, and euphony. It owes these qualities, in large measure, to the fact that it is an adaptation from the French ; but this fact emphasizes also the dependence of Sir Thomas upon the general literary conditions of his time. There is nothing finer in the work than the description of the death of Sir Launcelot :

So when Sir Bors and his fellows came to his bed they found him stark dead, and he lay as he smiled, and the sweetest savour about him that ever they smelled. Then was there weeping and wringing of hands, and the greatest dole they made that ever made men. And on the morrow the bishop sung his mass of *Requiem*, and after the bishop and all these nine knights put Sir Lancelot in the same horse bier that Queen Guenever was laid in before that she was buried. . . . And then Sir Ector threw his shield, his sword, and his helm from him, and when he beheld Sir Lancelot's visage he fell down in a swoon ; and when he awaked it were hard for any tongue to tell the doleful complaints that he made for his brother. " Ah, Sir Lancelot," said he, " thou wert head of all Christian knights." " And now, I dare say," said Sir Bors, " that Sir Lancelot, there thou liest, thou were never matched of none earthly knight's hands ; and thou were the courteous knight that ever bare shield ; and thou were the truest friend to thy lover that ever bestrode horse, and thou were the truest lover of sinful man that ever loved woman ; and thou were the kindest man that ever struck with sword ; and thou were the goodliest person that ever came among press of knights ; and thou were the meekest man and the gentlest that ever eat in hall among ladies, and thou were the sternest knight to thy mortal foe that ever put spear in rest."

The clearness and effectiveness of this style were borrowed, as has been said, from the French, and were not to be characteristic of English prose until nearly three centuries had passed and English literature had received the immense enrichment of the Elizabethan period. The mighty impulse which stirred the imagination to its depths left its truest and most adequate record in English verse. English prose in the hands of Raleigh, Bacon, Sir Thomas Browne, Milton, Burton, Fuller, Jeremy Taylor, and the other writers who were more or less under the influence of the Elizabethan period, disclosed great possibilities of eloquent and masterful expression, but it lacked clearness, simplicity, flexibility; and these qualities were at no man's command until the close of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century. Milton's noble phrases are familiar; a quotation from one of the masters of the English of the period, once widely read but now known rather in the avoidance than in the reading, may suffice to recall the characteristics of the ornate prose of the first half of the seventeenth century. Jeremy Taylor, the eloquent Bishop of Down and Connor, died in 1667, leaving behind him a great mass of writing, his sermons representing the force and splendor of his style at its best :

Prayer is the issue of a quiet mind, of untroubled thoughts; it is the daughter of charity and the sister of meekness; and he that prays to God with an angry—that is, a troubled and dis-

composed—spirit, is like him that retires into a battle to meditate, and sets up his closet in the outquarters of an army, and chooses a frontier garrison to be wise in. Anger is a perfect alienation of the mind from prayer, and therefore is contrary to that attention which presents our prayers in a right line to God. For so have I seen a lark rising from his bed of grass, soaring upwards and singing as he rises and hopes to get to Heaven and climb above the clouds; but the poor bird was beaten back with the loud sighings of an eastern wind and his motion made irregular and inconstant, descending more at every breath of the tempest than it could recover by the vibration and frequent weighing of his wings; till the little creature was forced to sit down and pant and stay till the storm was over; and then it made a prosperous flight, and did rise and sing as if it had learned music and motion from an angel as he passed sometimes through the air about his ministries here below. So is the prayer of a good man. . . .

This is noble English, but it becomes unmanageable; it is not yet pliant to the thought; it cannot receive the complete impression of a large mind, with all its gradations of thought, its reserves and overflowings of emotion, its subtlety and delicacy. The making of English prose into a perfect instrument of expression was the special work of the eighteenth century, although Clarendon, Temple, Halifax, and Dryden, did not a little to prepare the way for De Foe, Swift, Steele, Addison, and the later writers of the century. English prose, long in the making, contributed to by different languages, deeply influenced by other literatures, became lucid, flexible, natural, as the result of a long evolution. The various stages of that evolution

are clearly marked. When Clarendon began to write his history and Temple his essays, the time for the final clarification had come. To shorten the sentence and restrict it to a single proposition, or to propositions closely related, instead of crowding into it the contents of a paragraph ; to discard inversions and follow the natural order ; to drop the parenthesis, and to give the sentence an easy rise of cadence and sense toward the middle, and a natural subsidence toward the close—these were the final steps which freed English prose from the limitations of awkward construction and undeveloped resources of beauty and variety. Comparing a page from Matthew Arnold or Cardinal Newman with any prose before the “History of the Rebellion,” one sees at a glance how great the development has been, and how closely the prose writers of each period have been conditioned by it.

NATURE IN HEBREW POETRY.

A VERY interesting illustration of the development of idea, the broadening and deepening conception of life which, with character, forms the highest achievement of humanity, is to be found in the enlargement of the thought of Nature discoverable in literature. The three great themes of literature are God, Man, and Nature. About these fundamental conceptions all thought has organized itself, and in them all the arts have had their roots. The real history of the world has not been written in dynasties, constitutions, campaigns, and diplomacy ; it is to be found in the record of changes of thought concerning these dominant facts. Religions of all kinds have had their origin in conceptions of Deity ; and as these conceptions have changed, religious reformations or revolutions have followed. Every form of government has represented an idea of man ; and as that idea has changed, governmental overturnings and reconstructions have registered the change. The real difference between monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, is a difference not only of form, but of idea ; a difference of conception of the character and position of man in the world.

As a middle ground between God and Man, Nature has been an object of intense interest to men.

Her function and influence in the making of civilization and its arts, have already been indicated ; hardly less important has been her appeal to the intelligence and imagination, and the interpretation of her being, which different ages and races have accepted. The Hebrew regarded Nature in a profoundly religious spirit, as the garment of deity ; he barely paused to reflect upon the impressive phenomena which he saw about him, or to receive the full disclosure of their beauty, because through them, as through an open window, his eyes sought and found God. In the Book of Job the sublimest aspects of Nature are brought before the mind with a majesty and vividness never paralleled in later literature, but one hardly perceives that he is looking at Nature, so near and awful is the presence of God. These appalling visions of cloud and storm hold one's attention only as the mist through which the mountain is swiftly breaking into view.

The 104th Psalm is perhaps the most adequate and impressive picture of the universe that has ever been made, and it breathes the very genius of the Hebrew race :

Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment ;
Who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain ;
Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters ;
Who maketh the clouds his chariot ;
Who walketh upon the wings of the wind ;
Who maketh winds his messengers,

His ministers a flaming fire ;
Who laid the foundations of the earth,
That it should not be moved forever.
Thou coveredst it with the deep as with a vesture ;
The waters stood above the mountains.
At thy rebuke they fled ;
At the voice of thy thunder they hasted away ;
They went up by the mountains, they went down by the
valleys,
Unto the place which thou hadst founded for them.

.
He appointed the moon for seasons :
The sun knoweth his going down.
Thou makest darkness, and it is night ;
Wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth.
The young lions roar after their prey,
And seek their meat from God.
The sun ariseth, they get them away,
And lay them down in their dens.
Man goeth forth unto his work
And to his labour until the evening.

.
These wait all upon thee,
That thou mayest give them their meat in due season.

The sustained sublimity of this poetry is matched only in the Book of Job, and in the words of that prophet of glowing imagination, Isaiah. These great spirits hardly see Nature at all, so near and real is God to them ; all visible things are but a mist between them and the Invisible, are but a flowing stream rushing from his hand. "Break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest and every tree therein," says Isaiah in an ecstasy of

adoration. The limitation of this poetry as a representation of Nature lies in the fact that Nature is, in a way, lost in God ; it is all profoundly true, infinitely deeper and truer than a great deal of modern thought about Nature ; and yet, while it remains unapproached as an expression of the thought of God in Nature, the very clearness and majesty with which it sets forth this thought relegates Nature to a secondary place, and makes her an illustration instead of a theme.

There are two ways of bringing the thought of God to the imagination : by making Nature a transparent medium which is consumed in the vision of deity and rolled away like a curtain ; and by dwelling upon and spreading out the glory of the visible world with all its phenomena, its forces, its laws, its majestic harmony, and its perfect adjustment of parts so that a deep and beautiful sense of the infinity of divine resource and range and beauty is borne in upon the soul. The first method was that of the Hebrew poets ; it consumes the symbol in searching for its truth ; the very earth goes up in flame before the presence of the Lord. There is another and not less spiritual way, which deepens and broadens the impression of Nature until it is pervaded by the consciousness of an unseen presence. The garden is not consumed ; it blooms with a beauty deep as the soul of man, and at the eventide God walks in it. This is the poetry of Nature ; the Hebrew poetry, notwithstanding

the glory with which it crowns Nature for the moment, was the poetry of God. The idea of God shines through Hebrew literature and gives it its unique place. In the development and illustration of that idea it remains unapproached. To that idea all other ideas are subordinated ; in the endeavor to receive that idea, and give it fit utterance, the Hebrew genius was absorbed. It was left to other literatures to conceive of Nature as distinct from God, and yet instinct with divine force, radiant with divine beauty, and so charged with divine truth that it becomes a new revelation.

NATURE IN GREEK AND MEDLÆVAL THOUGHT.

THE Greek idea of Nature was fundamentally different from the Hebrew idea. In mythology and in poetry (which in earlier times is generally rooted in mythology) Nature is instinct with divinity. It is not as a garment, however, that these poetic minds conceive of the beautiful appearance of things about them; it is a great and distinct reality upon which they look; a real and radiant world in which the gods conceal themselves, and from which they may any moment emerge into visibility. Stream and forest, mountain and valley, rocky cavern and sounding sea, are peopled with beautiful beings, in whom the soul of all that varied and beautiful world was personified. Nature and deity were not separated, but Nature was to the Greek the primary and obvious reality, and the gods were the noble and lovely visions necessary to the completion of the world to such minds. Nature did not oppress the Greek with a sense of mystery and the haunting of vast and awful forces; she calmed and inspired him; emphasized her beauty and kept her terrors in the background; spoke to his imagination, and awoke it. It is true that Æschylus felt and expressed the depth and range and awful import of natural appearances, but there

was a touch of Orientalism in the writer of the sublime trilogy of Prometheus.

The oldest of Greek poets constantly reminds us of his familiarity with Nature, but it is with Nature as the background of human life. The "Odyssey" is the greatest out-of-door poem in literature ; it is the epic of the sea ; but in the "Odyssey" as in the "Iliad" Nature appears by way of illustrating human life, or as its background. A beautiful example of Homer's feeling for Nature is found in a passage of which we fortunately possess the translation of the Poet Laureate :

And there all night upon the bridge of war
Sat glorying ; many a fire before them blazed ;
As when in heaven the stars about the moon
Look beautiful, when all the winds are laid,
And every height comes out, and jutting peak
And valley, and the immeasurable heavens
Break open to their highest, and all the stars
Shine, and the shepherd gladdens in his heart :
So many a fire between the ships and stream
Of Xanthus blazed before the walls of Troy.

But the poet's most constant and effective use of Nature is by way of illustrating human life. The "Iliad" is full of such pictures as this :

The Ajaces and Ulysses and the son
Of Tydeus roused the Achaïans to the fight.
For of the strength and clamor of the foe
They felt no fear, but calmly stood, to bide
The assault ; as stand in air the quiet clouds
Which Saturn's son upon the mountain-tops

Piles in still volumes when the North wind sleep,
And every ruder breath of blustering air
That drives the gathered vapors through the sky
Thus calmly waited they the Trojan host,
Nor thought of flight.

Nature was real to Homer, but secondary.

Theocritus stood at the end of the long line of Greek poets, as Homer stood at the beginning. On the lovely slopes of Sicily, under those soft skies, and with that beautiful sea forever sounding its note in his ears, the greatest of pastoral poets saw Nature where her charm was finest and her spell most potent. In that delicately toned and softly radiant world his eye was content with the beauty which rested on the very surface of things. The senses of the poet were so finely attuned to the world in which he lived that he remains the type of the imagination which sees in Nature chiefly delicate touches of beauty, and has slight glimpse of that sublime harmony of parts in their spiritual relation to man which is one of the great poetic conceptions, and which, after all the researches of science, is still a flash of intelligence through the spiritual sense. Theocritus missed none of the varied and beautiful aspects of his world; he noted that the hush of noonday silenced all animate life; the lizard slept upon the wall; the lark wandered no more; the ancient murmur of the wood was still:

The red cicadas ceaselessly amid
The shady boughs were chirping; from afar

The tree-frog in the briers chanted shrill ;
The crest larks and the thistle-finches sang,
The turtle-dove was plaining ; tawny bees
Were humming round the fountain. All things near
Smelt of the ripened summer.

Here are the oaks, and here is galingale,
Here bees are sweetly humming near their hives ;
Here are twin fountains of cool water ; here
The birds are prattling in the trees—the shade
Is deeper than beyond ; and here the pine
From overhead casts down to us its cones.

Nothing can be truer or more beautiful than the feeling of these lines ; they reveal a delicate and exact observation, and an exquisite sensitiveness to the most delicate and fleeting aspects of Nature. And yet, with the fullest recognition of the inimitable charm of this poetry, it remains true that it reflects only the varied and flashing surface of the world ; it records no deep soundings into the fathomless sea of the sweep and movement of law and force and spiritual purpose through Nature.

During the centuries between the decay of classical culture and the Renaissance the feeling for Nature almost entirely disappeared. The rigid ideas which stamped the Middle Ages with a distinct, typical character well-nigh obliterated the sense of personality and emptied the visible world of beauty, inspiration, and authority. The curse of sin on the bowed head of humanity made all Nature corrupt and dangerous. Men ceased to

enjoy the world, and finally all but lost the perception of it. It is impossible for us to put ourselves back in thought to a time so different from our own and to imagine life from which Nature was shut out. It is recorded of Petrarch, toward the close of the fourteenth century, that he was the first man who cared enough about a lovely landscape to climb a mountain for the sake of the outlook from its summit. The Germanic peoples never wholly lost their love for Nature, but they ceased to be conscious of it and to express it. Their epics, so full of poetic and dramatic force, introduce Nature only incidentally; the background against which the figures move is very indistinctly sketched. Dante, who saw the world again after so many years of sleep and dream, takes us at the very beginning of the *Divine Comedy* into a "forest savage, rough, and stern," and again and again borrows from Nature some solemn or beautiful impression. Boccaccio enumerates many natural details and gives us a feeling that he keenly enjoys the beauty about the villa to which his charming group of ladies and gentlemen retreated from plague and heat to tell the famous stories; but it is not until Petrarch appears that the modern love of Nature for her own sake may be said to exist. Petrarch had the modern feeling for Nature, and fifteen miles from Avignon he found the lovely valley of Vaucluse, inclosed by great cliffs, the river Sorgue winding through it, and a great cavern in the rocks whence

flows the famous fountain. Here, out of pure love of solitude and this wild scenery, so repellant to the mediæval imagination, the poet spent sixteen years of his intensely active and varied life. Its charm is the frequent theme of his letters :

This lovely region is as well adapted as possible to my studies and labors, so long as iron necessity compels me to live outside of Italy. Morning and evening the hills throw welcome shadows ; in the valleys are sun-warmed gaps, while far and wide stretches a lovely landscape in which the tracks of animals are seen oftener than those of men. Deep and undisturbed silence reigns everywhere, only broken now and then by the murmur of the falling waters, the lowing of cattle, and the songs of birds. Would you know what I do here ? I live. Do you expect me to finish the verse, " and draw out my life in the midst of sorrow " ? No, no. On the contrary, I am alive and content and care not at all for many of the things for which men strive. Here is a picture of my everyday life : I rise from my bed at midnight, and at break of day I go forth ; but in the fields I study, think, read, and write as if in the house. . . . Over the steep mountains, through the flowery valleys and mossy caves, I wander all day long, measuring both banks of the Sorgue, seen by no living person, with only my thoughts for company. . . . In the morning I wander over the hills, in the evening through the meadows, or in that other more rocky garden near the fountain, which Nature has made more beautiful than could the art of man. This little spot under the rocks, in the midst of the waters, is more suited than any other to inspire profound thoughts by which the most idle minds may feel themselves lifted to lofty contemplation.

The feeling expressed in these words, the attitude and habits of mind described, are so entirely modern that it is difficult to believe they were

written between 1340 and 1350. The herdsman at the foot of Mont Ventoux, who begged Petrarch not to make the ascent, was a true representative of the Middle Ages; the poet, who was so overcome by the sublimity of the view from the summit that he could only repeat the words from the Confessions of St. Augustine, "And men go forth and admire lofty mountains, and broad seas, and roaring torrents, and the ocean, and the course of the stars, and forget their own selves while doing so," was a true representative of the modern spirit.

NATURE IN ENGLISH POETRY.

IN English poetry it is not until we open the prologue to the "Canterbury Tales" that we come upon a clear and beautiful perception of personality, and also upon a deep and unaffected love of Nature. It was fitting that the first of the great English poets, standing at the gates of the garden of song, should be the poet of the opening year, the laureate of the spring-time. Familiar as he was with the conditions of men, and their varied estates and characters, keenly as he saw, and shrewdly as he touched their weaknesses, Chaucer's heart was in the fresh loveliness of that English world still so alluring.

Whan that Aprille with hise showers soote
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,
And bathed every veyne in swich licour
Of which vertu engendred is the flour,

the poet's imagination was stirred by the sweetness of those peaceful meadows, the green lanes, the quiet downs, the gently running streams, the brooding shadows of the oak, the soft, misty sky. It was Nature in her "first intention," in that beauty which rests on the face of the world, which Chaucer saw; into the depths his insight did not pierce.

It was in these obvious aspects, and in the sym-

pathy between human moods and natural phenomena, that Shakespeare rested content. Human life was his absorbing study, and while he saw the beauty of the world whenever his eye rested upon it, he was interested in it mainly as the background and stage of the mighty drama which he studied. True poet as he was, with the direct vision, and the magical phrase always at hand, he has enriched us with countless glimpses of natural beauty caught in that magician's mirror with which he walked through life. Such phrases as "bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang," "jocund day stands tip-toe on the misty mountain tops," and ". . . by yonder blessed moon I swear, that tips with silver all these fruit-tree tops," are the finalities of written speech ; there is nothing beyond them but Nature herself. The description of Dover Cliffs in "King Lear" is one of the most vivid and noble pieces of writing in English ; it not only conveys a complete picture of the scene, but reproduces the impression of height, awe, and sublimity, in which the secret of the impressiveness of such an outlook lies. It was with human life, however, that the poet was concerned, and he drew freely upon nature to heighten the effect of narration or description, and to reflect the mood with which he was dealing. He externalizes an emotion by making nature share in it ; he brings the egotism of crime especially into startling relief by making the world participate in the tragic purpose. So, in the famous and oft-

quoted passage, as Duncan approaches the castle, Lady Macbeth notes that :

The raven himself is hoarse
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
Under my battlements.

But to the unsuspecting king, gracious of spirit,

This castle has a pleasant seat ; the air
Nimble and sweetly recommends itself
Unto our gentle senses.

And when the black night of crime has passed
and the fateful morning is at hand :

By the clock, 'tis day,
And yet dark night strangles the traveling lamp.

To Romeo, the loveliness of the Italian night steeps flower and tree and sense in a voluptuous beauty ; to Lear, driven from his daughter's door, night and storm shake the very bases of the shuddering earth. In Shakespeare we note the change of attitude toward Nature between the ancient and the modern mind. The Greeks saw only foregrounds, bits of near scenery, picturesque groupings, the beautiful details of nature. In modern poetry, on the other hand, great prominence is given to backgrounds, to large landscapes, to broad effects, to nature as a whole, to nature as a sublime background of human action and experience.

"L'Allegro," "Il Penseroso," "Lycidas," and "Comus," poems of Milton's early prime and of

his most spontaneous and happy moods, contain descriptive touches of the most delicate and telling kind ; phrases that seem to preserve the very bloom and fragrance of the season, the very soul of the phase or aspect of the scene. It is the classical taste for Nature which distinguishes both the "Lycidas," and the "Comus"; the perfect appreciation of exquisite detail ; the perfect characterization of lovely bits and glimpses of the world. Collins and Thomson contributed each in his way toward the development of the English feeling for Nature, but it is not until we open Gray's letters that we come upon that love of Nature for her own sake, which includes the rugged hills, the wild and solitary waste, the lonely and awful mountain recesses. Gray had this deep and genuine feeling for Nature, but the time had not come for its adequate expression. Cowper's aptness of epithet and simplicity of nature make us aware that, in Wordsworth's phrase, his "eye was upon the object"; unlike the earlier poets of the eighteenth century he looked directly at Nature and saw and reported her phenomena with absolute sincerity. Veracity and simplicity are the qualities which led him back to Nature and made him one of the fresh springs of modern English poetry.

Burns was more deeply poetic than Cowper and, in spite of the rigor and narrowness of his early years, he was more fortunately placed. Scotland was rich in the material of lyric poetry ; hills and

rivers, moors and highlands, lay under a beautiful mist of legend and tradition. To Burns the very air was charged with poetry, and his heart responded to every appeal made to his imagination. He saw Nature with a clear and penetrating vision ; his emotions and experiences were blended with the world about him, and in a single line a whole landscape flashes into view. Burns spoke of Nature without a touch of self-consciousness and with the intimacy of one born to the soil ; he loved with infinite tenderness every living thing that made its home in the fields. His early familiarity with field and sky, the solitude that came with that intercourse, the sensitiveness of his imagination, and the passion of his nature gave his poetry a thrill and rapture born only of the deepest emotion. The commonest wild-flower, in the verse of this passionate singer, has its roots beside the fountain of tears, and not a leaf stirs or falls but its image is caught in the tumultuous sweep and current of life.

It was reserved for Wordsworth to strike a deeper note in the treatment of Nature than had yet been heard in poetry. The Greeks had their beautiful glimpses of Nature in detail, their exquisite feeling for foregrounds ; the earlier modern poets had their fresh perception of the beauty of the world, their childlike delight in it, their awe of it ; the splendor and range of natural backgrounds were clearly seen, the wonderful harmony between human moods and the aspects of Nature was under-

stood and brought out with thrilling power and suggestiveness. But it was reserved for Wordsworth not only to see Nature clearly, and to see it as a whole, but to interpret it as a sublime symbol of truth and life, as a mysterious and marvelous creation, pulsing with life, instinct with thought, sublimely ordered in the harmony of its parts, pervaded with a spirit which speaks in every sound, and has all the wonder and authority of a divine voice. "In all her manifestations," says Aubrey de Vere, "whether in shape or in colour, in movement or at rest, from the most awe-inspiring of her forms, to the most fugitive of her smiles, he recognized divinely appointed ministers parleying with man's spirit, the quickeners of its finest impulses. How much the human mind conferred upon Nature, and how much Nature conferred upon the human mind, he did not affect to determine; but to each its function came from God, and life below was one long mystic colloquy between the twin-born powers, whispering together of immortality."

Wordsworth remains unrivaled among his contemporaries and his successors in the fullness with which this conception possessed him, and the completeness of the expression it gained at his hands. To him more often than to any other came that mood,

——that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on—
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame

And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul ;
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.

——a sense sublime

Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man ;
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.

No. 111
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Wordsworth saw Nature not in passing glimpses
of its various aspects, as the poets before him had
seen it, but in a vision which penetrated to the in-
nermost meaning of its phenomena and garnered
that second and finer harvest to the mind of which
Emerson speaks. But Wordsworth is not alone in
the possession of this new spirit of divination ; he
shares it with many of his contemporaries and suc-
cessors.

INTERNATIONAL INFLUENCES.

THERE still awaits some large-minded and profoundly sympathetic man the inspiring task of writing the history of intellectual contacts between races ; the history of those fruitful periods when the minds of different races have come together and the thrill of a fresher and broader vision of things has passed from race to race. The story of civilization is largely told in the history of inter-racial influence, and the written histories are not broad and deep enough to contain it ; but in the development of literature there have been periods which mark great transitions, and which take their character from these transmissions, and it would be possible to tell the story of these brilliant episodes when the transference of thought has been like the flashing of lightning from cloud to cloud. The history of Greek literature in its immediate as well as in its remote influence takes large account of the East and of Rome. To the Greeks and the Hebrews, as Mr. Arnold often reminded us, we owe the large and commanding ideas of our life ; the Hebrews gave us the great thought of God, clearly conceived and realized, and of righteousness as the supreme law of life, and the Greeks gave us the ideas of freedom, beauty, form, and genius. The literatures in which these

ideas are set forth and illustrated are still unspent fountains of spiritual and intellectual influence. Their formative power is discoverable in every modern literature, and such is the vital force of these great books, into which the life of races has been poured, that they are continually renewing their hold upon us by fresh contacts. In the story of our relations to the books of the Greeks, there is not only the thrilling hour of the first discovery, but, at intervals, the stir and delight of rediscovery. To the end of time Job and Æschylus will continue to disclose themselves anew to us. We shall lose interest in them, we shall react against them ; and then, when they have become indistinct and remote, they will suddenly flash upon us some intense and splendid ray that in an instant will make us aware how great would be the darkness if they were not. Such a moment of rediscovery came to Italy at the close of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth century, and there are few chapters in history so brilliant as that which records the recovery of classical literature by the Humanists, its diffusion through Europe by the printers, and the intellectual liberation and fruitfulness which followed this contact of the mind of the Greeks and Latins with the minds of the modern races.

Our own literary history bears constant evidence of the influence of other races and literatures upon us. Chaucer represents the earliest impact in a

large way of the Italian on the English mind, as he represents also the French influence so often discernible in our earlier literature. Two hundred years later a greater Italian influence was in the English air. Surrey and Wyatt, who had felt the charm of Italy, had long given place to the dramatists, for many of whom Italian themes had a deep and almost overpowering influence. One turns to Ford, Webster, and Cyril Tourneur for the vivid portraiture of the moral monsters produced by the peculiar conditions of Italy at that period. It is a curious fact that while Italy kept her own literature serene and sunny,—often licentious, but almost always cheerful and buoyant,—the English genius was drawn to the most tragic and awful episodes and characters in contemporary Italian life. Boccaccio gives his licentious story geniality and humor; Webster tells the tale of the “The Duchess of Malfi” as if in the very horror of it lay its charm for the imagination.

A century later and French influence plays a great part in the comedy and poetry of the Restoration; not by any means the exclusive part often conceded to it, but a very potent and influential part. A century and a quarter later Coleridge and Carlyle were interpreting German thought to English minds, and German literature, so late in becoming an adequate expression of the German nature, but so deeply touched with the German spirit at last, became a powerful influence upon

some of the strongest and most original English minds of the century. The later period has seen also the return of Oriental upon Western thought. From the time of Goethe to that of Edward Fitzgerald there has been a deepening interest in Eastern literature, and nearly all the greater Oriental works are accessible in English, German, or French. The "Shah Nemeh," the epic of Persia, and the greater epics of India, are as accessible as Homer and Milton; while Kalidasa, Omar Khayyám, Firdousi, Hafiz, Saadi, and other Eastern poets have their familiar places on our bookshelves. Their influence is not confined to such definite adaptations of form and spirit as Goethe's "West Easterly Divan"; it is discoverable in a subtle transfusion of Eastern thought through the Western world, and it is possible that Professor Max Müller did not exaggerate the importance of this influence when he said, years ago, that the discovery of Sanskrit was, in some respects, more important than the revival of Greek scholarship at the time of the Renaissance.

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY.

INTER-RACIAL influences were never so strong as at the present time, because never before have there been such freedom and completeness of intercourse. Formerly a book must have become in some sense a classic before it was translated into another language. To-day every book of any importance speedily finds its way to the readers who would be interested in it. All the Western nations are fast becoming the common constituency of powerful and inspiring writers, without reference to the accident of nationality. French and German books have long been freely translated into English ; to these must now be added Spanish, Italian, Russian, and Scandinavian books, and the time is not distant when a book which is issued from some secluded Hungarian town, or from remote Siberia, will find its way to those for whom it has the authority of truth or the beauty of art. Contemporary literature is already international, so far as breadth of interest and comprehensiveness of audience are concerned. De Maupassant, Daudet, Bourget, Valdes, Goldos, De Alarcon, Paul Heyse, Spielhagen, Björnson, Ibsen, Lie, Tolstoï, Dostoyevski, Gogol, and Tourguéneff, to speak of novelists alone, are as well known to a great number of English-speaking people as the novelists who

write in English. Indeed, of late years, no writer of our own language has had such vogue as Ibsen or Tolstoi. That a good deal of this sudden interest is unfruitful curiosity, mere craving for intellectual sensation, which stirs no depth and leaves nothing behind but a confirmed restlessness and superficiality, is certainly true. A good deal of this following of foreign writers is a matter of nerves, not of mind; it is an expression of restlessness which has as little to do with real activity of mind as the fitful rushing of the wind has to do with the changes of the seasons.

But all this superficial interest in foreign thought and art must not make us blind to the profound significance of this world-wide interchange of ideas. It will be impossible hereafter to deal with literature in any large, intelligent way without ample equipment of knowledge of all the great literatures. The range and significance of a literary movement like realism, for instance, can be perceived by those alone who discern that movement as it discovers itself at the same moment in different literatures. When English critics began to write historically about English literary development, they traced what has been called the classical period in English writing exclusively to French sources; they did not know that while the movement had its immediate impulse at home, it was part of a general movement which embraced England, France, Germany, and Italy. One result of the

enlarged literary horizon of to-day has been a conception of literature which makes such mistakes impossible. One great gain from this familiarity with books in all languages will be a clearer perception of the accuracy and adequacy with which literature responds to and interprets the successive phases of human experience. It is only as we secure a wide outlook that we perceive the conformation of the landscape ; it is only as we study books as a whole that we discern the mighty influences that penetrate and unify them.

The importance of this growing international intercourse can hardly be overstated, so far as diffusion of ideas and knowledge is concerned ; books are the great reservoirs of national life, the great interpreters of national character, and the complete interchange of books between different peoples means such a comprehension of race traits, habits, and ideals as society has never before possessed. But the ultimate influence of this free intercourse on literature itself is less clear ; he must be a very bold or a very ignorant man who would venture to dogmatize on such a subject. Races are historical entities of such deep rootage that even the fullest international intercourse is not likely to modify the real characteristics of a race. Ignorance, and the antagonisms which spring from it, will slowly disappear, but the distinctive strength and genius of each race will remain unmodified. Superficial differences vanish, but fundamental differences re-

main. The peasant who lays aside his traditional costume does not change his character. Now, the strength of literature lies in universal ideas or experience, realized with peculiar clearness and embodied with peculiar force and beauty in specific incidents, episodes, and persons. The greater its power, the closer its identification with the soil which produced it. This law is strikingly illustrated in Shakespeare, who is at the same time the most universal and the most distinctly English of writers. Literature cannot become universal in the sense of abandoning local types and color. The measure of its artistic power will be the vigor and vitality with which, on the one hand, it realizes individuals, and, on the other, makes them significant of universal truth. Like national character, it may part with its racial pettiness and provincialism, but it must retain its racial force and vitality.

LITERARY DECADENCE.

IN literature, as in philosophy and theology, there are ages whose special mark is conservatism or contraction, and ages whose special mark is progression or expansion. Progress, and the reaction which often follows it, affect the arts as deeply and as definitely as they affect speculative thinking. The capacity of men to bear the strain of prolonged activity is limited, and after a time emotional and intellectual force is depleted, and pause and rest are inevitable. These periods of reaction are often accepted as final by the men who live in them, and who, from lack of perspective, are unable to find the true relation of their own period to the entire development of which it may be but a brief and insignificant phase. Nature bears her successive harvests, and midwinter is no less a part of her fruitful year than midsummer. Whatever may be said of the spiritual and mental vitality of individual races, it is clear that there is an exhaustless impulse behind human life, and that action and expression are normal and inevitable. There will be periods of repose and stagnation, but when rest and renewed contact with the sources of impulse in nature and in the soul have recovered freshness of feeling, and faith in the promises of

life, the arrested movement sweeps in again to its appointed end.

In ages of decadence literature discloses its intimate and necessary relation with the totality of life quite as distinctly as in ages of faith and progression. It shares the subsidence of impulse and emotion which leaves men weakened in imagination, in creative power, in moral force, in energy, and courage. It becomes derivative instead of original; reproducing faintly a greater past instead of fashioning new forms and interpreting new ideas. It loses variety, and follows imitatively and timidly the lines marked out in more vigorous periods. It is conventional in thought, correct in form, cold, pedantic, and barren of any real and contagious influence. Such was the age of the Greek decadence, when the great voices of the past were heard in contemporary work as faint and muffled echoes. The "Anthology" contains some immortal flowers, but for the most part it is a collection of wax imitations, without freshness, fragrance, or even the skill which might delude us for the moment into the belief that we were looking at a piece of nature. In his survey of the Greek literature of the later period Professor Mahaffy characterizes in a sentence not only this particular group of books, but all literature in its decadent periods: "The whole of this literature was a literature of erudition, knowing no other excellence than to copy great ancient models, and rightly basing

the perfection of this imitation on close and protracted study. No hint reaches us of popular poetry, no echo of popular stories, no fresh source in this barren land from which some new genius might, like Theocritus, draw a new 'draught of Hippocrene,' and attempt the rejuvenescence of Greek literature."

Such also was the age of the Roman decadence, when to the adventures of Æneas there succeeded the adventures of Lucius, who by an accident in a love affair was turned into an ass. It was fitting that the author of this characteristic work of a decaying race, once notable for its rugged and virile character, should confess that he took delight in his mirror, and should find in the sending of a package of tooth powder to a friend fit occasion for the making of a few graceful verses !

The comedy of the Restoration is in many ways illustrative of the decadence of spiritual and intellectual impulse in English literature. It is not imitative, and it is often brilliant and original ; but it lacks substance, force, staying power. There is no profound feeling behind it ; there is not even the sting which seriousness gives to satire ; there is nothing but the mocking laugh with which idleness and indifference recognize folly and vice. Decadent literature may take this light and hollow tone, or it may become an elegant echo of the past ; a matter of skillful imitation and classical precision

of form. Whenever the greater emphasis is laid on form, the age or the man is parting from the sources of power. The unmistakable sign of an age of imitation and decadence is precision and regularity.

AN AGE OF EXPANSION.

THE unmistakable sign of an age of expansion, on the other hand, is freedom in dealing with matters of form, and breadth and variety of expression. Literature responds to a powerful spiritual or intellectual impulse by the force and range of its productiveness. So absorbed does it become in the utterance and interpretation of the particular truth committed to it, or the special emotion by which it is swayed, that it ignores the past and forgets that there are classical models. It is necessary to grasp this essential difference between an age of contraction and an age of expansion in order to understand the literary movement of our own century. Never since men began to write have there been greater variety of form, audacity of idea, or more radical departure from the literary standards and models of the past, than in our own time. To those who fail to perceive the intellectual direction of the century, and to recognize how natural and healthful it has been as a whole, the literature of the last seventy years is a hopeless chaos.

If one comes to the study of this period from the study of the books of the eighteenth century, the writers are so numerous, the methods of expression so individual, the lines of thought so divergent and often so antagonistic, that one loses all perception

of order and symmetry. Instead of a great art, harmonious in all its parts, one hears at first a vast discord of strenuous voices. It is only when the ear is trained that it detects the harmonic quality of these countless tones.

The very complexity of the intellectual movement of our time is significant ; it means that we are living in an age of expansion. An age of contraction is always an age of regularity and order, because the objects on which its thought plays are steadily diminishing in number, and the boundaries of its activities are rigidly fixed by tradition. An age of expansion, on the other hand, is always an age of freedom and, to a certain extent, of lawlessness ; barriers once regarded as insurmountable are broken down, traditional canons of taste are disregarded, ancient laws of construction are transgressed without so much as a momentary pang of the artistic conscience ; and all this because the mind has taken a new start and resolved to see things for itself, without much care for the reports of the past. Liberty always carries with it a certain license, the overflow of its powerful current ; and liberty is the prime characteristic of an age of expansion. In such a period a classical school, involving the recognition of certain principles of construction and certain standards of execution as authoritative and final, is impossible. The impulse is not only toward freedom, but toward a completeness of expression which disregards all formal or

conventional bounds. The modern movement in English literature began with the quiet but radical departure of Cowper and Burns from the methods and models of their predecessors and contemporaries. They were not professional reformers, but no men ever set more distinctly revolutionary influences at work. Wordsworth followed with more definite and conscious reaction against literary traditions ; Byron with his passionate note of revolt ; Shelley with his piercing cry of indignation ; Carlyle with his scornful arraignment of conventions and respectabilities. Add to these the diverse work of Coleridge, Arnold, Tennyson, Swinburne, William Morris, Rossetti, Dickens, Emerson, Whitman, and the range and compass of literary expression in our own language becomes clearly apparent. When we bring other literatures into the field of observation, and recall Hugo, Balzac, Tourguéneff, Tolstoï, Björnson, and Zola, we catch a glimpse of the breadth of thought, observation, and emotion which are developed in an age of expansion. To those who look deeply enough, the apparent chaos and disorder of this age are the signs of one of those building eras which enrich and enlarge human life ; its license and occasional lawlessness are the overflow of that energy which bursts forth whenever the spirit of man drinks again of the wine of new truth and feels the thrill of a new impulse of life. Literature to-day touches every phase of life from the highest psychological problems in Brown-

ing's verse to the lowest aspects of animalism in Zola's prose ; as an expression and illustration of life it is all but coextensive with life itself. This activity is often morbid, inartistic, partial, and misleading ; it often obscures the lines which separate the normal from the abnormal, the cleanliness of health from the loathsomeness of disease ; but it is the activity of intense life, and its very excess and violence bear testimony to the force of the impulse behind it.

Expansion is only another name for development, unfolding, growth ; one of the greatest facts in history is the widening of human life from the few, rudimentary, and simple conditions of primitive times to the multiform, complex, and varied conditions of modern society. The significance of history, says Hegel, is man's endeavor to attain freedom. Nothing can permanently arrest that movement ; it is the working out of one of the deepest impulses of the soul. Edmund Burke opposed with lofty spirit and eloquence the movement of expansion in his own age. In his closing words on the French Revolution he said : " The evil is stated, in my opinion, as it exists. The remedy must be where power, wisdom, and information, I hope, are more united with good intentions than they can be in me. I have done with this subject, I believe, forever. It has given me many anxious moments for the last two years. If a great change is to be made in human affairs, the minds of men

will be fitted to it; the general opinions and feelings will draw that way. Every fear, every hope will forward it; and then they who persist in opposing this mighty current in human affairs, will appear rather to resist the decrees of Providence itself, than the mere designs of men. They will not be resolute and firm, but perverse and obstinate." The instinct of Burke's great nature, which speaks out in these remarkable words, was keener and truer than his intelligence; he felt what he did not see. The change has been even greater than he dreaded, and it is not yet accomplished; but the evils he anticipated have not followed, and the good he did not foresee has been wrought out. Every great productive age in literature is an age of expansion; the age of the Greek tragedy, of Dante and Petrarch, of the Elizabethan drama, of Lope de Vega and Calderon, of Goethe and Herder. Every period of contraction and decadence is an age of imitation, formalism, and sterility. These facts are deeply significant; they disclose the character and tendency of contraction and expansion in human thought and experience.

THE SPIRITUAL ELEMENT IN LITERATURE.

THE great laws of literary development, as Taine and other eminent students of literature have traced them, become evident enough after a little study ; they lie on the surface. But there are deeper and more obscure modifications of thought and form than those which can be laid bare by any study of race or age or environment ; modifications and changes in the very structure of thought, which give a new direction to feeling and a new color to sentiment ; which enlarge the whole intellectual life by a process of expansion as unconscious and as invisible as the process of fertilization by which the soil receives into itself the luminous life of the sky. Has it not been a strange oversight in the study of literature, that while the river courses and the mountain ranges have been traced and located with precision, observers have taken little thought of those overhanging heavens which are as much a part of every landscape as running stream and everlasting hill ? Without the upper firmament the lower firmament would be but half a world ; a world of completed structure and form, but without light or color or life. This upper sky of spiritual truth, ideal, and relationship is too often left out of account in our surveys of the field of literature ; and yet it is this spiritual element which

adds immeasurably to the complexity and variety no less than to the wealth and power of modern books.

The most obvious characteristics of Greek literature are repose, order, harmony, and moderation. These are the elements of a great plastic art ; an art that presents noble actions in that supreme moment when every actor becomes the unconscious idealization of his own thought and the whole scene is an instantaneous revelation of beauty. It is this brief moment of idealization, this unconscious pause which marks the climax of noble action, that we find in Greek art of the best period, and this alone. The Greek touched nothing with chisel or stylus which did not present to him a clear, distinct, and well-defined outline ; with half lights, with shadows, with the mystery and wonder of thought or feeling which could not be put into some form of definite expression, he would have nothing to do, either in sculpture, architecture, or literature. The world in which he lived and worked lay before him forever radiant with the light of clear intelligence ; no dusky arches sprang from the walls of his temples, no inexpressible emotion played on the features of his statutes, no mysterious impulses and visions lured the thought into shadowy solitudes in his books. In all the arts which he practiced there is the same plastic instinct, revealing itself in outlines whose delicacy and beauty are to the men of our time the dream of a lost world.

But the Greek paid a great price for the harmony and order of his art ; he made his problem clear by striking the unknown quantities out of it ; he was not without glimpses of a spiritual world, but he refused to consider or interpret it. With all its radiant loveliness Greek art is of the earth ; it is forever lost to us, not because skill has forsaken us or the instinct for beauty died out in our souls, but because we can never return to the attitude in which men stood when they created it. It is true, as we are constantly reminded, that we can never match it with a kindred perfection ; it is also true, and true in the deepest sense, that we have outgrown it. It no more represents our thought, our ideal, our faith, than the images of the gods which it has preserved for us represent our conception of the unseen and eternal Spirit. The Greek moved through a single world, and his thought, by virtue of self-imposed limitations, was simple, clear, orderly, and harmonious ; we live, move, and have our being in two worlds, and our perpetual struggle is to bring them into harmony ; hence the complexity, variety, and apparent confusion of our life and our art. We have lost the antique simplicity, definiteness, and harmony, but we have gained the inexhaustible inspirations and resources of the spiritual life.

What, then, is the spiritual element in literature, and how does it reveal itself ? The spiritual element is the perception of a relationship between humanity and a divine nature outside of and above

it, of actual fellowship between men and this divine nature, and of obligations, resources, and consolations growing out of that fellowship ; in brief, of a complete organized life of the soul in large measure independent of its material surroundings, and in which is to be found the fullness and completeness of life. In the *Iliad*, for instance, though the gods hover over the plains of Troy they are as material as the men who struggle beneath them, and the poem finds its motive and its consummation within the limits of purely human activity. There is not a breath from Olympus which inspires any hero with an unselfish or ideal purpose ; there is no suggestion anywhere that the long struggle is to be decided by any but material forces or that victory is to bring anything greater than a material reward. In Browning's "*Paracelsus*," on the other hand, or in Tennyson's "*In Memoriam*," both representative modern poems, the work has a spiritual motive ; there is a recognition of spiritual relationships that rests upon spiritual need and fellowship, there is clear, definite movement to a spiritual end. And all through the literature of this century we find such relationships, purposes, and ideals. The books of pure literature are few which do not bring into the foreground the thoughts of God, of immortality, and of the possible greatness of human life reached by the power and through the consciousness of these fundamental conceptions. In the poetry which

does not give this thought prominence it is still present in ever recurring suggestion and illustration ; we feel its presence as we feel the presence of the sky when we look into the heart of the summer flowers and know that without it they could not have been.

Place the great books of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries side by side, and a single glance makes clear the difference in spirit and attitude which exists between the foremost minds of the two epochs. How far Swift, Steele, Addison, Goldsmith, Johnson, and Cowper, in depth of sentiment and grasp of life, fall below Carlyle, Emerson, Newman, Coleridge, Maurice, Martineau, and Kingsley ! In poetry and in criticism the writers of our time have touched the deepest things with a vigor and an insight of which the literature of the last century affords hardly a suggestion. The strength of the men of the eighteenth century lay largely in their mastery of the art of clear, orderly, and finely proportioned style, and in their weighty or graceful moralizations on the society in which they lived ; the strength of the great writers of the nineteenth century reveals itself most clearly in their vivid and controlling conception of nature and life as symbols of an invisible and spiritual order of existence.

The sixteenth century was a great religious age. Its faith was high, its feeling intense, its devotion to religious principles at times fanatical. The

impetuous current of his life flows through its literature and gives it unequaled freshness and variety ; but in which of its writers shall we look for an adequate representation of life as a possible fellowship with the Divine Spirit, as everywhere and always under the control of spiritual laws? Not certainly in Shakespeare ; for it is on the boundaries of the invisible world of spiritual truth that his wonderful vision fails and the genius which would otherwise have been universal pauses and retreats, baffled and empty-handed. With characteristic insight Emerson says : “ Shakespeare, Homer, Dante, Chaucer, saw the splendor of meaning that plays over the visible world ; knew that a tree has another use than for apples, and corn another than for meal, and the ball of the earth another than for tillage and roads ; that these things bore a second and finer harvest to the mind, being emblems of its thoughts, and conveying in all their natural history a certain mute commentary on human life.” Shakespeare employed them as colors to compose his picture. He rested in their beauty and never took the step which seemed inevitable to such genius, namely, to explore the virtue which resides in these symbols and imparts this power.

If Shakespeare failed to penetrate this deeper world, certainly none of the group of dramatists of whom he was the master spirit discerned it. We must not forget the ethereal genius of Spenser, whom Lamb described as the poet's poet. Of all

the nobly endowed men of his time he was the most spiritual. One feels in him that marvelous identification of the saint and the artist which gives the work of Fra Angelico a kind of spiritual radiance. Surely earth and heaven are not far asunder in such verse as this :

And is there care in Heaven ? and is there love ?
In heavenly spirits to these creatures base,
That may compassion of their evils move ?
There is : else much more wretched were the case
Of men than beasts : but oh, the exceeding grace
Of highest God, that loves his creatures so,
And all his works with mercy doth embrace,
That blessed angels He sends to and fro,
To serve to wicked man, to serve his wicked foe.

But the world of the "Faërie Queene" was not the world of Shakespeare, and Marlowe, and Dekker ; it was an ideal world, created by the imagination as a possible reconciliation between the real and the ideal. The supernal light does not shine on human habitations, it lends its radiance to one of those visions of the imagination with which humanity nourishes and sustains its secret hopes. There was a confession of weakness in Spenser's retreat from the real world about him which makes it clear that he could not trace a harmonious purpose between the spiritual and the material life, and that in order to find the harmony which he believed existed he fashioned a world of his own. The deepest insight always discovers, as Goethe saw clearly, that the ideal cannot exist save in the real.

THE GREEK AND HEBREW TENDENCIES.

THE stream of modern civilization shows two great currents ; one having its origin among the Greeks, the other among the Hebrews. These two tendencies are now in process of assimilation, but are still in some measure divergent and at times antagonistic. We have the Greek spirit almost entirely unmodified by the Hebrew spirit in such writers as Walter Savage Landor, and the Hebrew spirit almost entirely unmodified by the Greek spirit in such writers as Carlyle. It is the struggle between these two tendencies—the one artistic, plastic, and liberalizing ; the other moral, intense, and conservative—which introduces an element of confusion into the literature of our century. The Greeks had their consistent thought of the universe, and their unbroken effort to express that thought in art. The Hebrews, on their side, had their one distinct and commanding thought of the universe, and the unique characteristic of their literature is the marvelous power with which that thought was developed, extended, and made controlling through their long and varied history. Each of the two races which have given modern civilization its strongest impulses wrought out a single thought with a common effort not the less definite and inevitable because it was unconscious. We who

have received both these great streams of tendency into our lives are swept, first by one and then by the other, to such an extent that literary epochs and schools of writers may be characterized and described as they embody and express clearly and decisively one or the other of these great conceptions of life ; the thought of conduct finding its expression in the illustration of the law of righteousness, and the thought of beauty blossoming out the world over in the order, the genius, and the loveliness of art. The writers of the "art school," as it is sometimes called,—Swinburne, Rossetti, Morris, and their compeers,—represent a drift and tendency as real as any other in this age, though not so central nor at bottom so important. They are not solitary voices, nor are they alien spirits in our literary development ; they express a real hunger for beauty, and are the leaders of a real movement toward its conquest.

The reaction against Puritanism, against the exclusive rule of the Hebrew spirit, is still incomplete. It is not a reaction toward "worldliness," conformity to lower and more material standards ; it is a reaction from the partial to the whole ; from the rigid and arrested movement of mind to its free, healthful, and complete activity ; from the endeavor to live by vision of a single side of life to the endeavor to live by vision of a complete life. Matthew Arnold has said that Puritanism locked the English mind in a dungeon ; a more exact statement would

be that it led the English people through a deep defile in the mountains from which only a single star was visible, the polar star of righteousness. That star is not less visible to us than to the Puritans, but it is no longer solitary ; a whole heaven of moving constellations has swept into our vision. We see the star of righteousness as clearly as ever the Puritan saw it, but it has become the center of a universe that shines out in a divine revelation of beauty around it. The Hebrew tendency is being supplemented by the Greek tendency, but neither diverted nor impaired by the process. The note of unrest in the verse of the poets of the "art school," and of Arnold and Clough, is the expression of this lack of harmony in the age. It is the recovery of that harmony which these poets have striven after. They bring us face to face with the great problem which confronts us ; the harmonizing of beauty and liberty with the order, the discipline, and the noble severity of the moral law. Two worlds lie in our vision, and art cannot turn its face from either.

A WORD ABOUT NATURALISM.—I.

THE name of Balzac is a word of power among the realists ; and yet it is not easy to find in this master of fiction either the principles or the method of the writers who profess to stand in direct line of succession from him. His realism was of that genuine order which underlies the noblest art of every age ; it studies with tireless eye, and reproduces with patient hand, the facts of life, in order that it may the more completely discover the general law, the universal fact, which are the chief concern of art, behind them. The "more analytic consideration of the appearance of things" which one finds in Balzac is accompanied by a more powerful irradiation of the imagination. It is easy to understand Zola when he says "l'imagination de Balzac m'irrite"; it is just this imagination, this penetration of the real with the ideal, which makes the *Comédie Humaine* such a marvelous reproduction of the complex life of a most complex epoch of history. The naturalism of Zola, which is not psychological but physiological, which reduces life to its lowest factors, has little in common with the art of Balzac, which found all methods and facts inadequate for the complete illustration of the sublime, all-embracing fact of life.

Naturalism is worthy of study, not only because

of the great place it fills in contemporary literature, but because it is the logical result of realism, and, by exaggeration, makes the defects and limitations of realism more apparent. The issue between the theoretical realism of the day, and the older and eternal realism of fidelity to nature as the basis of all art, is the more momentous because it is concealed in many cases by so much nice skill, and so much subtlety and refinement of talent. The divergence between the two is in the nature of a great gulf fixed in the very constitution of things; it goes to the very bottom of our conceptions of life and art. To see nature with clear eyes, and to reproduce nature with deep and genuine fidelity, is the common aim of the old and the new realism; the radical character of the difference between them is made clear by the fact that the radical realists of the new school deny the existence in nature of the things which the older realists held to be deepest and truest. The new realism is not dissent from a particular method; it is a fundamental skepticism of the essential reality of the old ends and subjects of art. It strikes at the very root of the universal art growth of the world; adherence to its fundamental precepts would have made Greek art an impossibility; would have cut the ground from under Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides; would have prevented the new growth of art and literature in the Renaissance; would have paralyzed the old English drama, the classical French drama, and

the late but splendid flowering of the German genius from Lessing to Heine. If the truth lies with modern realism, we must discard all those masters by whom the generations have lived and died, and seek out other teachers and shrines.

The older art of the world is based on the conception that life is at bottom a revelation ; that human growth under all conditions has a spiritual law back of it ; and that human relations of all kinds have spiritual types behind them ; and the discovery of these universal facts, and the clear, noble embodiment of them in various forms, is the office of genius and the end of art. The unique quality of the Greek race lay in its power to make these universal, permanent elements of life controlling. This is the secret of its marvelous and imperishable influence upon the minds of men. This was the work for which it was so lavishly endowed with genius. The art instinct among the Greeks was so universal and so controlling that all individual thought, feeling, and living seemed to be a kind of transparent medium for the revelation of elements and qualities which are common to the race. What was personal, isolated, unrelated to universal life, has largely disappeared, and there remains a revelation, not of Greek character, but of human life of unequalled range and perfection. Every great Greek character is a type as truly as every Greek statue ; and it is the typical quality which lifts the whole race

into the realm of art. But modern realism knows nothing of any revelation in human life ; of any spiritual facts of which its facts are significant ; of any spiritual laws to which they conform in the unbroken order of the Universe. It does more than ignore these things ; it denies them. Under the conditions which it imposes art can see nothing but the isolated physical fact before it ; there are no mysterious forces in the soil under it ; there is no infinite blue heaven over it. It forms no part of a universal order ; it discloses no common law ; it can never be a type of a great class. Naturalism is, in a word, practical atheism applied to art. It not only empties the world of the Ideal, but, as Zola frankly says, it denies "the good God" ; it dismisses the old heaven of aspiration as an idle dream ; it destroys the significance of life and the interpretative power of art.

A WORD ABOUT NATURALISM.—II.

SUCH was not the conception of Balzac. With characteristic acuteness and clearness he puts the whole issue in a paragraph: "A writer who placed before his mind the duty of exact reproduction might become a painter of human types more or less faithful, successful, courageous, and patient; he might be the annalist of the dramas of private life, the archæologist of the social fabric, the sponsor of trades and professions, the registrar of good and evil. And yet to merit the applause at which all artists should aim, ought he not also to study the reasons—or the reason—of the conditions of social life; ought he not to seize the hidden meaning of this vast accretion of beings, of passions, of events? Finally, having sought—I will not say found—this reason, this social mainspring, is he not bound to study natural law, and discover why and when Society approached or swerved away from the eternal principles of truth and beauty?" And he adds, to the same end, "History does not, like the novel, hold up the law of a higher ideal. History is, or should be, the world as it has been; the novel—to use a saying of Madame Necker, one of the remarkable minds of the last century—should paint a possible better world." Readers of Balzac do not need to be told that his work, defec-

tive as it sometimes is on the side of moral insight, is still a commanding interpretation of life because it penetrates through individual fact to the universal fact, and through particular instances to the common law. It is only when one sees clearly this denial of the spiritual side of life, and sees it in all its results, that one understands why Naturalism inevitably portrays the repellant, and a refined realism the superficial, aspects of life. In this pregnant fact lies the secret of its rigidity, its coldness, its inevitable barrenness. A natural method, a true and vital conception, are always capable of further expansion. Is there anything beyond Zola? He has pressed his theory so far that even his hottest adherents see no step left for another to take. The energetic Naturalist—a man of great force and splendid working power—has left his followers not a single fig leaf to be plucked off the nudity of the “*bête humaine*,”—the human animal,—in the delineation of which he rivals the skill of Barye. It is equally difficult to imagine any further progress along the lines of a consistent realism; it has brought us face to face with the hard, isolated facts of life, and, having discarded the only faculty that can penetrate those facts to their depths and set them in the large order of the higher reason, there remains nothing more to be done by it. Materialism in art reaches its limits so soon that it never really gets into the field at all.

This denial of the imagination, this effort to dis-

card it entirely and banish it into the region of moribund superstitions, is at bottom a confession of weakness. It is the refuge of writers who have inherited the skill, but not the impulse, of the great literary creators, and who are driven, unconsciously no doubt, to adopt a theory of art which makes the most of their strength and demands the least of their weakness. What is needed now, in fiction as in poetry, is a revitalization of the imagination and a return to faith in it. The results of the scientific movement are misread by men of literary genius no less than by religious people ; in the end, they will be found to serve the noblest uses of art no less than of religion. Their first effect is, indeed, to paralyze all superficial faiths and inspirations, by disturbing the order of facts upon which these rested, or from which they were derived ; but, in the end, it will be found that the new order of the universe has under it a harmony of sublime conceptions such as no art has ever yet so much as dreamed of, and no religion ever yet grasped with clearness and certainty. Science not only leaves the imagination untouched, but adds indefinitely to the material with which it works. The more intelligent study of facts which it has made possible and inevitable purifies and enlarges in a corresponding degree the conceptions which underlie them, and will add in the end immeasurably to the scope and majesty of life. The hour is fast approaching for a new movement of the imagina-

tion ; a new world awaits interpretation and reproduction in art at its hands. The first effects of the scientific tendency, evident in the uncertain note of contemporary poetry and the defective insight of realistic fiction, must not be mistaken for the final effects ; it is this mistake which gives our poetry its elegiac note and our fiction its general confession of the futility of all things. Great works of art never come from hands afflicted with this kind of paralysis. The real outcome of the scientific spirit is something very different from the interpretation of realism ; for its interpreters and prophets the time is fast approaching, and no blindness and faint-heartedness of this generation will delay their coming when the hour is ripe. They, too, will be realists as all the great artists have been ; realists like Dante and Shakespeare ; like Balzac and Thackeray ; like the wise Goethe, who held resolutely to the fact because of the law behind it, who saw that the Real and the Ideal are one in the divine order of the universe, and whose clear glance into the appearance of things made him the more loyal to the Whole, the Good, and the True.

CLASSICISM AND ROMANTICISM.

THE conflict between Romanticism and Classicism is perennial ; it is a difference not of fashion and taste, but of temperament and race. The Classical type in its purity is rarely found among the Teutonic peoples ; it is far from perfect in Corneille and Racine, but the Latin races are its only modern possessors. The true classic of our blood will always be solitary and exceptional ; he will stand apart from the literary schools, and aside from the literary movement of his age, as Landor did. Born in the decade which gave us Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, and Scott, at his maturity, when the fervid generation of Keats, Shelley, and Byron were in full tide of song, Landor was as secluded and solitary as a mountain tarn. His long life of well-nigh ninety years included the entire Romantic movement of modern times. He stood in relations of personal friendship with the English poets who gave a new impulse and direction to the national imagination ; he was a young man when the Schlegels, Novalis, and Tieck were recalling the enchantments of the Middle Ages in Germany ; he was at the full maturity of his power when Lamartine published the "*Méditations*" and Victor Hugo routed the French Classicists on the stage of the Theatre Française with his drama of

“Hernani.” Through this tumultuous age, so intensely modern in spirit that for the moment the antique seemed wholly obliterated, Landor preserved a calmness, a moderation, a self-possession that were born of hourly companionship with a world of classical repose and strength. To study him is to get in clear perspective the proportions of his contemporaries, and to feel what is easily apprehended but not so easily described—the difference between the Classical and the Romantic manner.

Emerson says that the Greek heroes are always in repose ; the most difficult and masterly achievements are made with a serene composure of manner. The attitude is characteristic of the best Greek thought and life. They lend themselves to sculpture more readily than to any other art, and through the matchless harmony and serenity of the works of the great Athenian sculptors we approach most nearly the secret of antique life. The Classical spirit concerns itself mainly with ideas which it can clearly define ; obscurity, that sense of indefinable vastness which attaches to ideas too large to be clearly seen in full outline, is repugnant to it. The ideas which it deals with it sets in clear, bold relief, and trusts to their commanding importance to awaken interest rather than to any aids of imagination. It does not attempt to create an atmosphere which gives color, warmth, and nearness to its conceptions, but leads directly to them through

a white light of pure thought. It suffers no rapture of creative energy to identify it with that upon which it works, and no tide of emotion to sweep it irresistibly onward. In the most tremendous moment it is self-possessed and holds the whole movement of thought in calm mastery. As a result of this attitude the classical spirit preserves a chastity of imagination, a repose of manner, a firm balance of artistic qualities, which impress upon its noblest products the stamp of supreme art. Even Æschylus, whose imagination had a range and vehemence almost alien to the Greek taste, holds the mighty forces of earth and air and sea which he evokes in the "Prometheus Bound" in resolute control.

The Romantic spirit, on the other hand, is stirred most powerfully by ideas that overmaster it in their sweep; it delights to move about in worlds not realized; to descend with Dante into hell, and climb with Beatrice into heaven; to brood with Shakespeare over depths of tragic history and possibility so profound that the dramatist can only throw a faint light into their unfathomable abysses. It describes its conceptions with a glow and splendor which transform and magnify; it lavishes all the resources of the imagination upon them and leads up to them through an enchantment of the senses. It delights in vague and subtle suggestions, in impressions of remoteness and undefinable vastness. The "Ancient Mariner" may serve as an illustration of the marvelous and elusive atmos-

phere which a Romantic writer of the first rank can spread over his subject ; to a Greek, subject and treatment would have been alike repugnant and impossible. The Greek gained his unrivaled clearness, symmetry, and order at the sacrifice of that vast and commanding range of ideas which will not admit of definite statement ; the modern spirit yields something of the perfection of form, if only by suggestion it may bring into consciousness the sweep of unseen and transcendent forces. The antique world was marvelously clear of outline because it was so resolutely finite ; the modern world is strangely and pathetically vague because it cannot shut out the infinite. The Romantic writer, too, is often identified with his subject and swept irresistibly onward by its movement. Having created Prospero, he cannot command him. The Greek gives us only the clear and perfectly finished results of creation ; the modern writer gives us also the passion and fire of the creative mood. He is transported out of himself and we have his thought often before it has cooled and taken form in the molds of speech.

FOLK-LORE AND LITERATURE.

THE immense contribution of mythology to literature has been noted ; the contribution of folk-lore is hardly less important. The Norse folk-lore, which may be taken as an illustration, is quite as rich in incident and idea as the Norse mythology ; and it was a piece of good fortune for literature that, while it yet lingered in the remoter valleys of Norway, apart from the quickening currents of modern life, so apt a reporter of its rich poetry, quaint fancy, and racy dialect as Asbjørnsen was at hand to preserve it. An intense lover of nature, full of the knowledge of the woods and fields, and with quick popular sympathies, he traversed the whole country, leaving no spot unvisited which gave promise of a hitherto unreported folk-story. The legends have kept, therefore, the freshness which rarely survives the transfer from oral to written speech. They preserve, even in translation, the charming simplicity of that untrained art which somehow secured the effects of the most vivid and picturesque setting of the personifications under which primitive thought hides but does not conceal itself.

They open a world of wonder to the reader who takes them up for the first time and gives himself to their spell, but to those who read them in the

light of the companion legends of other races they will yield deeper enjoyment and more substantial knowledge. Titian, in that splendid maturity which lasted far on toward his hundredth year, and enriched Venice every year with some miracle of color, never ceased to dream of his youth and to put into the background of his pictures the grand mountain lines of Cadore and Ampezzo ; modern men have lost out of consciousness the background of their earliest history, but the student of literature still discovers its dim outlines, its vague shadows, its fading colors, behind every great literary work. We are still the children of our fathers, though we have forgotten our homestead and lost the dialect of our childhood ; primitive habits, instincts, and ideas still disclose themselves in our commonest speech and under our most familiar surroundings. We go far to look upon obelisks, Egyptian temples, and Assyrian monuments, but we use everyday words, which, as Max Müller has said, are more venerable than the most ancient memorial surviving in the modern world. Children in the nursery are lisping syllables that were once upon the lips of our earliest ancestors, and out of which the philologist reconstructs the oldest civilization of Central Asia.

In nothing is the childhood of the race so vividly recalled as in those numberless stories of wonder and mystery which have been handed down from generation to generation since the dawn of history.

The architect takes us back to the tent with its central pole as the earliest model of construction, the jurist finds under our laws a framework as old as Rome, the humblest believer in historical Christianity lives under ordinances and worships through symbols which were hoary with age long before the cathedrals were built; but the buried past becomes real and present in no form so vividly as in the folk story which we have learned almost in the language of a thousand generations before us. Science, among her many services to our modern thought, has given us nothing more valuable than the deepening sense of historic continuity, the growing perception of that vast unfolding which has evolved our complex modern life out of the few elements of mental and physical life with which the race began.

It was not until science went into the humblest homes of peasantry and listened to the stories told by flickering hearth-fires, into the nurseries of all nations and looked over the shoulders of childhood into those hornbooks, which, in spite of the thumbing of untold generations, keep the perennial freshness of youth, that we recognized in this well-worn currency of fancy the oldest coinage of thought. Grimm had the instinct of a born discoverer when he set himself to explore the vast region of folklore, and although many patient investigators have followed, there is still unknown wealth for the lucky finder. The loftiest thought of primitive men passed

through mythology into literature, and has been personified in imperishable figures, but about these central conceptions there sprang up a vast growth of fancy, not rich enough to send its flowers into the realms of art but vital enough to scatter a beautiful blossoming along all the common ways of obscure life.

The Sleeping Beauty, to awaken whom so many artists and poets have passed with Sigurd through the circle of fire, or with the nameless Prince through hedges of thorn, still slumbers on in many languages, and the mythologist does not destroy the beautiful fancy when he shows us that the legend has a deeper meaning than it yielded to us when we first learned it ; Jack the Giant Killer is as heroic as universal as Ulysses, and of far wider reputation ; and that dreadful eye which Perseus captured from the three weird sisters in his search for the Gorgon, turns up in the forest of Norway in the possession of the trolls. Hindu, Greek, Iranian, Teuton, Slav, Celt, have been repeating from age to age the marvelous stories learned before the first migration of races had taken place, before the languages we speak and the literatures we read had any existence.

But more impressive than the antiquity of these stories is their poetic value and significance. They not only take us back to the earliest times, but they disclose to us the thoughts of the earliest men about themselves and the world in which they

lived. They record the first impressions upon the untrained imagination ; and as we follow their gradual development into wider and yet wider conceptions we begin to understand that the vast and complex result which we call literature was not achieved by the fine skill of culture, but is a rich growth of seeds that were sown when men looked up for the first time into far heavens and out for the first time on the wide earth.

THE EPIC.

THE epic was the earliest of the greater literary forms in point of time, and remains one of the foremost in point of interest and importance. If it yields the first place to any literary form, it is to the drama, because the drama is more inclusive of human life and interest, and because it is still an existing form. It is true there has been of late years no drama-writing of the first order; nothing that in range and significance compares with "Faust"; but it must not be forgotten that the foremost English poets of the later Victorian age—Tennyson, Browning, and Swinburne—have used the dramatic form, if not with the highest, certainly with a very high degree of success. The epic on the other hand is probably an extinct form; the national epic is not likely to be heard again by any later generation. Dante and Milton, Tasso and Camoens, may have successors, but the line of Homer, Firdousi, and the unknown poets of the "Nibelungen Lied," "Beowulf," and the "Kalevala," is extinct.

For the characteristic of the earlier epics is to be found in the fact that they were growths, and their making involved a deep, rich, unexhausted soil. The epics were the first fruits of the earliest experience of nature and life on the part of imaginative

racés ; to the production of the material of which they were fashioned, races and ages of time, rich in observation, endurance, memory, and vision, were necessary. Mr. Taylor says that the epic goes back "to that actual experience of nature and life which is the ultimate source of human fancy." Mythology, which was the interpretation of nature, and legend, which is the idealization of history, were the elements of the epic, and the real poet was the race. The Greek race created the "Iliad" and "Odyssey"; Homer, whether a veritable poet or the name for a nebula of poets, gave the wandering songs or stories their final form.

The "Odyssey" is believed to be the work of a later age than the "Iliad." There was probably a contest of some kind between the peoples, kinsmen more or less remote, who lived on the opposite coasts of the *Ægean* Sea. Many peoples had a share in that struggle, and the story of it was carried far and wide. It was the most significant event in the common history. It was passed in story from man to man and from generation to generation. Gradually older stories were incorporated into the original tale ; the gods were involved in it ; it was amplified ; new incidents were added ; the chief actors were more and more dramatically represented ; poet, priest, and reciter, as they passed the expanding story on, added touches of imagination or enriched it with more vivid characterization. Gradually all anterior Greek life was drawn upon

to expand and embellish it, so that it became a veritable growth out of the richest soil of national life ; a true epitome and compendium of Greek thought about God, nature, and themselves ; a real Bible of their faith, their fancy, and their history. When the poet of the "Odyssey" appeared, whose work it was to give these scattered stories organic sequence, harmonious form, and that transforming quality which we call style, he found ready to his hand a great mass of legends and traditions which had long been the common possession of a great body of the Greek race. This was not only the probable evolution of the Greek epics, but of the "Maha Bharata" and the "Ramayana," epics of India ; of the Persian "Shah Nameh," or "Epic of Kings" ; of the Finnish "Kalevala" ; of the Norse Sagas ; of the Teutonic "Nibelungen Lied" and "Gudrun" ; of the epics which grew up about the central figure of Charlemagne ; of the story of the Cid ; of "Beowulf," the Saxon epic ; and of those poetic epics of chivalry which we owe to the livelier imagination of the Celtic race. These stories belong to the unconscious ages of the world ; the ages when the literary instinct had no professional place or recognition ; when the imagination acted directly on the facts of nature and life without the intervention of science ; when the products of experience, observation, and fancy were held as a universal possession, by a kind of poetic communism. The story had no home save the mem-

ory ; it grew insensibly as it passed from mind to mind, and to the very end it remained in large measure a direct and unpremeditated growth of popular life. In the case of the stories about Charlemagne we possess the material for a comparison between the legend and the history, and we find only the faintest and most general resemblance between the two ; the history was only a suggestion which set the popular fancy in motion.

It follows of necessity from the fact that the race or nation and not the individual is the real poet in epic poetry that the epic is always objective, in broad contrast with lyrical poetry, which is the creation of individuals and is therefore very largely subjective. The epic poet, even more than the dramatic poet, is out of sight. In many cases he is so completely detached from his work that his name has perished. The material was not a part of him ; it was not drawn from his own consciousness ; it was the real history of a race, or something which took the place of actual happenings in the minds of the people. Homer, Firdousi, Virgil, and their compeers sang of heroes, deeds, achievements ; things real or believed to be real, and things always outside of themselves. It is this objectivity, this large infusion of the true historical element, which gives epics their massiveness, their freshness, their directness, and reality. Not solitary pools are they, in which a few stars shine, but veritable rivers of song, flowing from unknown and inaccessible

sources, through vast stretches of landscape, with a slow, wide, majestic sweep.

The epic differentiates itself from the lyric by its objectivity ; from the ballad by its scope, its directness, its narrative vigor, and continuity ; and from the drama by its subordination of the importance and interest of individual characters to the interest and importance of the complete action. It often abounds in episodes, and these episodes are often of striking beauty, but they blend with the narrative. In his delightful essay, "On Translating Homer," Mr. Arnold sums up the literary characteristics of the Greek poet in these words : "Homer is rapid in his movement, Homer is plain in his words and style, Homer is simple in his ideas, Homer is noble in his manner." And this is true not only of Homer, but, with modifications, of all national epic poetry. The lucidity and simplicity of Homer are thoroughly Greek ; the Hindu put more color and sensuousness, the Norseman and Teuton more force and intensity, into their epics ; but it is true of all true epic poetry that it is simple, direct, plain, and, as a rule, noble. It has the simplicity of reality, the directness of unconscious expression, the nobility of a vast range of life.

SOME MEDIÆVAL EPICS.

IF Romanticism had done nothing else, its service in directing attention to the beginnings of poetry in Europe would entitle it to the gratitude of all lovers of literature. In the literary movement of the day there is no healthier indication than the growing interest in those great epics which were the fountain-heads of modern poetry. Classical literature has been so long the exclusive possession of scholars, and has descended to our day with such a mass of scholarly traditions; has been held forth through so many centuries as furnishing the highest examples of form and manner, that the world has almost forgotten its popular origin. Hesiod sang out of the narrow surroundings of a peasant's career; the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are full of the rush and sweep of a growing national life; Phrynichus heard the master-tones of the Greek tragedy in the confused murmur of rude rural festivals, and every step between his imperfect verse and the sublime harmony and repose of Sophocles can be clearly traced.

Modern literature is a very different product from that which drew its inspiration from the popular traditions of western Asia Minor and the peninsula of Greece, but it is not less distinctly in its highest forms the outgrowth of popular life.

The Middle Ages, as we are coming to understand them, held all the elements of modern life in the germ. There has been no sudden break, no wide chasm, but the natural unfolding of forces and instincts that were already advancing through the rudimentary stages of development. There was no tragedy of Hamlet, but the story of the melancholy Dane was told and retold in numberless homes ; there was no drama of Faust, but the man who had sold himself to the devil for a brief lease of power was a familiar figure to the mediæval imagination. There was everywhere going on that unconscious perception of natural phenomena and of the play and scope of human life which is the first stage in the growth of a literature ; and there was also going on that brooding of the imagination upon the facts and fancies of perception which is the second stage. The unspeakable splendor and mystery of nature, the awe and wonder of the struggle of life, were sowing the seeds of poetry broadcast among the races of Europe. There was no scientific apprehension of nature and life ; there was instead a poetic conception of these things constantly growing more distinct and comprehensive, until the imagination of the Middle Ages had created a new heaven and a new earth in which history and fable were inextricably blended.

In this vast, dim region of myth and legend the sources of the literature of modern times are hidden ; and it is only by returning to them, by

constant remembrance that they drain a vast region of vital human experience, that the origin and early direction of that literature can be recalled.

There was a commerce of thought between the races of western Europe long before there was any exchange of more material merchandise. The myth which embodied the thought of the Norseman became the possession of his Teutonic brother in the south, and was modified, changed, and embellished by contact with another imagination. All the leading mediæval myths became domesticated in Germany, and her early epics stand in close relation to the great body of European story and myth. The "*Alexanderslied*" and the "*Rolandslied*" were renderings of traditions that had assumed such vast proportions in France that they form one of the great streams of mediæval legend. The "*Nibelungen Lied*," the most complete and dramatic creation of the Middle Age epoch, is made up of elements partially mythical and partially historical. Since the rediscovery of this great poem by Bodmer in 1757 no less than twenty-eight manuscripts of the epic have come to light, and edition after edition has been given to the world by German scholars of the first rank. Since the hour when the Romantic school in the person of August Wilhelm Schlegel laid hold upon it, as a priceless treasure secured from the waste of the Middle Ages, Germany has never ceased to study this poem. The most exhaustive examination has failed to

separate with precision the various elements which enter into it. No scholar has yet been able to trace all the tributaries which feed this mighty volume of song, but it is certain that one great stream flowed out of the frozen north; that the Eddas, those venerable witnesses to the vigor and splendor of the Norseman's imagination, and the Volsunga Saga, sent southward an original current which passed through many lands, and was enriched by the history and tradition of every country through which it flowed.

Among the throng of lesser poets who made the age of the Hohenstaufen emperors memorable in the literary development of Germany, three men stand far above their contemporaries in native endowment and in lasting achievement. Gottfried von Strassburg drew the story of Tristan from Celtic sources. It belongs to that rich cycle of myths which had their home in Wales, Cornwall, and Brittany, and in which the great Celtic hero Arthur is the central figure. This charming story has received a beautiful setting in the hands of Tennyson, but it has also received an injustice which the lovers of the original myth can hardly forgive. Tristan and Iseult are victims of fate in the early poem, in the later they are victims of passion, and the element of overshadowing and inevitable tragedy is lost.

Hartmann von Aue drew upon the same rich store for his two epics, "Erek" and "Iwein," the first

of which Tennyson has told in the exquisite idyl of *Enid*. "*Der arme Heinrich*," on the other hand, which Longfellow has substantially given us in the *Golden Legend*, was of German origin. The greatest of this brotherhood of epic poets, Wolfram von Eschenbach, found material for his *Parzival* in still another cycle of myths, those which tell the story of the Holy Grail. The blending of the legends of Arthur and the Holy Grail was the confluence of two of the great streams of mediæval story. The later legend first appears in Spain and Provence, and Wolfram was directly indebted to a Provençal poet and to the French rendering of Chrétien de Troyes. *Parzival*, whose story has been told so often at Bayreuth by the greatest interpreter whom mediæval legends have found, is the finest of all the German epics of the age in range and delicacy of imagination, in power and subtlety of thought. In it, for almost the first time in this literature, appears the element of spiritual insight; a looking through the personages and events of the fable to the deepest spiritual verities.

It will be seen from this brief review of these great works of the Germany of the Middle Ages that German thought played over the whole range of contemporary story, and enriched and enlarged whatever it fastened upon. And one has but to recall the greatest modern works of literature and art to discover how vital and enduring these early creations were, and how widely they have inspired

the genius of the age. Wagner has sung, Cornelius painted, and Morris retold in verse the story of the Nibelungs, while Bulwer, Tennyson, Matthew Arnold, Morris, Swinburne, and others have found an inexhaustible mine of poetry in the Celtic mediæval legends.

THE DRAMA: SOURCES.

THE essence of the drama, as the word implies, is action. It differentiates itself from the epic, which also deals in large measure with action, in that the action which it discloses is significant of character and depends for its interest on this significance. The action described by the epic is narrative, and forms part of a series of actions in which the chief interest lies in the movement and the outcome ; in the drama interest centers in the action itself, because it is a revelation of the divine order of the world as in the Greek drama, of the relation of individuals to a fixed political or social order as in the Hindu or Chinese dramas, or of that general adjustment, or lack of adjustment, of the person to the general order of life which we call character, as in the modern dramas. The drama becomes, therefore, one of the most impressive and significant of all the great literary forms, because of its scope and depth. In the great epics one reads the story of the external life of a race or an age, with glimpses of its ideals of character as related chiefly to political, social, and domestic relations ; in the great dramas one reads the deepest thought of an age or race with regard to the relations of men with the unseen powers, forces, and laws of the universe. The drama shows us the

soul in action, and its greatest works reveal the individual soul in collision with a higher will, a stronger force, as represented by the decrees of fate, the family, or the state.

The story of the evolution of the drama is one of the most interesting in the history of literature, and is especially worthy of study as bringing out clearly the fundamental fact that literature, in its great forms, is always a growth and not a manufacture, that it is a direct product of life, and that it is a representation or interpretation of life. There is profound truth in the statement that the arts were born at the altar. The drama was the direct product of early Greek worship, as were also the epic and the lyric. Mr. Moulton calls the ballad-dance a kind of literary protoplasm, because it was the common material out of which all varieties of literature were developed. It was a combination of gesture, music, and speech; the expression of the idea through the whole person, not through the voice alone. The dance was as expressive as the play of the features or the sound of the voice; it was a translation of every shade of feeling and every change of thought into movement. The whole body was employed as a harmonious means of expression. So completely has this form of expression perished that it is difficult to recall it even to the imagination; modern dancing has nothing in common with it but motion. Charles Kingsley gives the keynote of the old Greek dance :

“ A dance in which every motion was a word, and rest as eloquent as motion ; in which every attitude was a fresh motive for a sculptor of the purest school, and the highest physical activity was manifested, not, as in coarse, comic pantomimes, in fantastic bounds and unnatural distortions, but in perpetual, delicate modulations of a stately and self-sustaining grace.” Add to this dance singing and speech, and we have the material out of which prose and verse, the lyrical song, the epic narrative, the dramatic action, were developed.

The ballad-dance was an act of worship ; not the self-conscious, rationalized, and ritualistic worship of later times, but the free, spontaneous, natural worship of men of untrained but imaginative nature. The natural inspiration of this worship was the god Dionysus, who represented the spontaneous, inspirational element in life on the side of order and also of license. As an embodiment of the mysterious forces of nature whose ebb and flow are registered in the change of seasons Dionysus inspired the loftiest thought ; as a representation of the same sublime mystery in the reproductive forces, he inspired also the most unrestrained outbreaks of passion, the wildest license. Tragedy and comedy were both his legitimate offspring. The story of his wanderings is one of the most familiar and picturesque in mythology. His wonderful beauty tempted the Tyrrhenian sailors to seize him as he sat on the jutting rock, and bind him with withes.

Once on the deck of the vessel the withes fell off like bands of straw, wine flowed on the deck, vines climbed the mast and hung thickly on the yards, a delicious fragrance filled the air, grapes and garlands hung upon the oars, and a lion suddenly stood in tawny majesty on the deck. The frightened sailors leaped into the sea and were changed into dolphins, while the god, resuming his natural form, ran the ship into port. When he came to Bœotia, Pentheus, the King, received him with great suspicion, resisted the worship which sprang up with strange wild rites about the new god, was finally drawn by irresistible curiosity to witness this worship, was discovered by the worshipers, and put to death by their own hands.

Such stories were in all minds, when the worship of Dionysus spread through Greece. Spring and autumn were the natural times of special worship, which rapidly took the form of popular festivals; and the seed time and harvest gave a natural basis for a contrast of mood, the alternation of the grave, the mysterious and mystic with the joyful, licentious and orgiastic. Many of the worshipers dressed themselves as Satyrs, and from the goat skins which they wore comes the word tragedy. These worshipers, in a rude chorus, were grouped about the altar, and as they moved away and returned to it their motion, speech, and singing formed the ballad-dance.

The theme was the greatness, history, and mys-

tery of Dionysus. The stories of his wanderings were told and retold in countless forms, with song, descriptive recitation, rudimentary dramatic effect ; the lyric, the epic, and the drama all implicit in this combination of every form of expression. As some story of the god was repeated, it became clearer and more effective, the dramatic element became more distinct and dominant, the narrative by the whole chorus was gradually broken up into lyrical passages, the descriptive recitals were committed to one person, who detached himself from the chorus and became a kind of messenger. As the personalities of the god and of the men with whom he contended, as in the story of Pentheus, for instance, were more clearly realized, impersonation was permitted, the chief characters acted the story, and the chorus supplied its background and foreground of history and comment. When this stage was reached the drama was a distinct and coherent literary form, and the dramatist, when he appeared upon the scene, found the form and the material ready to his hand. It remained for him to follow with conscious purpose, and the skill and insight of an artist, the well-defined lines of evolution already marked out.

THE DRAMA : COMEDY AND TRAGEDY.

THE division of dramatic material into tragedy and comedy was natural and inevitable ; the themes significant of the deeper and more mysterious aspects of the character of Dionysus gaining prominence at one of the festivals, and gradually developing the representation of the profounder and more serious phases of life, while the aspects of the nature of the god which had an affinity with frolic and license gained prominence at the other, and were gradually made the occasion of satire, humorous delineation of persons, characteristics, and incidents. The essence of both tragedy and comedy is action, but, in the second, action brings out the foibles, follies, and petty weaknesses of men, and the irrational and inconsequential manner in which situations and events often stand related to each other ; while, in the first, action always brings out the collision between the individual soul and the laws of life, the institutions of society, or those customs and conventions which have come to have the force of laws. At the first glance there is very little in common between those brilliant, all-embracing world-plays which bear the name of Aristophanes, and the comedies of Shakespeare ; but there is a real unity of spirit and attitude between them. In such a comedy as the " Birds "

the genius of one of the greatest of poets plays with the world as a god might play with it ; with careless audacity, with splendid disregard of order and probability, with dazzling brilliancy of transforming power. The stage is so great, so full of magical effect, that one loses sight for a moment of the steady ironic purpose behind all the shifting, dazzling phantasmagoria. This boundless overflow of audacity and beauty, this lawless confusion of exquisite lyric music and world-destroying laughter, was, however, Aristophanes's way of pouring ridicule on Athenian ambition and credulity. Shakespeare, Molière, and the whole company of comedy-writers have had a similar purpose. To hold up the weaknesses and foibles of men to ridicule, to defeat the meanness of the miser and make him contemptible, to overthrow the proud, to evade the tyrannical, to pluck the feathers from the upstart, to exhibit the lighter irony of events often defeating the best-laid plans—these are the ends of comedy. A great artist like Aristophanes may suggest a deep, ironic view of the universe, a skepticism which plays like fire about the roots of life ; but he keeps this subtler and profounder purpose veiled behind a flashing play of irony on the lighter aspects of life and character : if the deeper purpose become prominent and clear, the play would become a tragedy.

While comedy illustrates in action the lighter and more superficial aspects of life, tragedy brings out

in action its profoundest problems. The most important and significant of these is the harmonizing of the individual will with the fixed conditions of life ; the root of all tragedy is found in the antithesis, old as history, between freedom and necessity. These two elements—the fixed and the changing, the permanent and the spontaneous—are the substance out of which life is made, and success or failure in the real, rather than in the conventional, sense of the words lies in the harmonizing of these elements. It is the collision of the individual will with the established order, of freedom with necessity, of the voluntary and spontaneous with the fixed and unchanging, which gives tragedy its themes. There are certain changeless laws of life ; there are certain enduring institutions like the family and the state ; there are certain deep, historic forces like race and religion ; and whoever antagonizes these things comes within the sphere of tragedy. In the trilogy which finds its central figure in Agamemnon we have a father, upon whom there already rests a family stain, sacrificing his daughter to his country, and so offending against the sacred rights of the family ; he returns in triumph to meet the penalty of his crime against the home. That crime is avenged by his slaughter at the hands of his wife. But the murder of a king is a crime against the state. The son punishes this crime by slaying his mother, and so commits another crime against the family. And the tragic

force works steadily on until the long record of crime is balanced by expiation. In the story of Œdipus the protagonist is innocent of intentional offense against the order and purity of the family, but he disregarded warnings which would have put a man right-minded toward the gods on guard. Through all the Greek drama runs this element of collision between the individual will and those forces or laws which underlie life, and which, in their volume, their vastness, and their inevitableness, constitute what the Greeks conceived of as fate ; with this added idea, that the family, not the individual, was the unit of society, and that the penalty rested on every member of the family until the offense had been expiated.

In the modern drama the collision is mainly within the soul ; it is a struggle between contending passions ; a loss of balance between the passions and law, or that blind assertion of one passion in defiance of all law which marks the supreme development of egotism. Othello surrendered himself to the blind fury of jealousy ; Lear disregarded the character of his children in transferring his authority to them, and insisted upon the outward forms of affection, willfully putting aside its reality in Cordelia ; Macbeth trampled upon all law in the insanity of ambition ; Tito became the victim of his own weakness degenerating into crime ; Jean Valjean strove in vain to extricate himself from the consequences of his early offense ; Mag-

gie Tulliver was destroyed by the collision of her free, spontaneous nature and temperament with the hard, rigid, uncomprehending natures about her ; Anna Karénina followed love across the boundary line of moral order, and found herself contending, desperate and solitary, against all the forces of society. It is this collision of the individual will with the order of things, illustrated in many ways, which tragedy elaborates and sets before the eye on the stage. The blindness of the victim or the lawlessness of the offender setting his own will or passion against fate, law, or society are its familiar themes. There is, however, another and larger aspect of life illustrated in the tragedy, in which this collision is not only noble, but morally imperative. All the great martyrdoms have involved the opposition of the individual will to the will of society, or of the part of it in control for the moment. The sublime death of Socrates was so calm that the tragic element seems barely present ; it was not the less death, however, that terminated the contest between the greatest of Greek teachers and the Athenian state. The deepest and most mysterious of all antitheses, the opposition of the divine and the human in the world, found its victim in the greatest of all teachers and its tragedy in the divinest of all deaths.

THE LYRIC.

IN his preface to "The Golden Treasury," Professor Palgrave, while disavowing any attempt to formulate a strict and exhaustive definition of lyrical poetry, declares that the term lyrical implies that each poem shall turn upon some single thought, feeling, or situation. This definition—for, in effect, it is a definition—brings out one characteristic of lyrical verse: its concentration. The epic has the breadth and volume of a river; the drama has the scope and variety of the sea, which touches all shores and is swept by all winds; the lyric is like a mountain pool, which may be tossed into foam, but remains a pool, although sometimes of fathomless depth—a pool into which a star often shines with magical luster, over which the shadow of a cloud or the flight of a bird moves, in which a moving world of images is reflected.

But the lyric has other and more distinctive qualities than this of narrow scope and definite concentration of feeling and thought. Indeed, so vast is the range of the lyric that no definition seems adequate to express all that it contains. The lyre is the universal instrument; the instrument which yields its secrets of tone to but a few, but which the many master so far as to draw from it a music interpretative of simple experiences.

The most familiar and, perhaps, the best-loved poetry is lyrical—the poetry of universal experience, of common hopes and sorrows and joys; the poetry of pure song.

The extent and variety of forms used by the lyrical poets will be brought out by recalling the fact that the odes which, like those of Tyrtæus and the national hymns, have stirred whole peoples, or, like those of Gray and Wordsworth, have expressed the most intense or the most profound emotions; the hymns of faith and prayer; the songs of love poured out by troubadours, trouvères, minnesänger, and by later poets of every race and degree; the songs of nature like the old Saxon "Cuckoo-Song," sweet with the breath of ancient meadows and forgotten springs, or like Shakespeare's "Hark, Hark, the Lark," Shelley's "The Cloud," Wordsworth's "To the Cuckoo" and "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," Keats's "Autumn," Browning's "The Year's at the Spring"; the great elegies like "Lycidas" and "Thyrsis"; the sonnet, which is sometimes purely reflective or didactic, but is oftener purely lyrical, like the sonnets of Shakespeare and of Milton; like Wordsworth's "It is a Beauteous Evening, Calm and Free," Mrs. Browning's "Sonnets from the Portuguese," and Rossetti's sonnet-sequence "The House of Life"; the French forms, so frequently reproduced of late years by the writers of lighter English verse—the Triolet, the Ballade, the Villanelle, the Rondeau,

the Rondel; the lyrical ballad, which is distinguished from the folk-ballad and the legendary or historical ballad by the personal note which runs through it; the *vers de société*, or poetry of the drawing-room, which in the hands of men like Praed, Thackeray, Locker, and Dobson discovers a quality of imagination, feeling, and beauty entirely consistent with lightness of touch and gayety of mood—all these forms of verse (and they include the greater part of the poetry of the world) belong to lyrical poetry.

Of this great mass of poetry included under the word lyrical, concentration of idea and feeling is a leading characteristic; the lyric, as a rule, falls under Professor Palgrave's definition, and deals with a single thought, feeling, or situation. Its chief characteristic, however, is the personal note that runs through and, as a rule, dominates it. The individuality of the poet is stamped upon it. Shakespeare stands apart from his dramas, but pours himself into the sonnets. The epic is, broadly speaking, objective, and deals with external events and happenings; the lyric is, broadly speaking, subjective, and deals with individual hopes, fears, joys, sorrows, loves, hates, faiths, and aspirations. The epic is national, racial; the lyric is personal. Homer records the story of a great historical or legendary movement; Sappho and Alcæus sing of their own experiences, of the beauty of the world, of life and death as personal facts. Milton re-

counted the sublime story of the Fall and Redemption ; Burns touched the mountain daisy with the pathos of his own life. Hegel brings out strikingly the contrast between the epic and the lyric when he says that Homer is so completely outside the works which bear his name that, although his heroes are immortal, his own existence is doubtful ; while Pindar, on the other hand, is an immortal figure, although his heroes have become shadows of names. The lyrical poet opens his heart to us so completely that he becomes the central figure of his poem whatever be its incidents or characters. Lyrical poetry concerns itself with the inner life, in broad contrast with the epic, which concerns itself with external life ; concerns itself with a single emotion, feeling, thought, incident, or experience, in broad contrast with the drama, which is based on action and includes a wide range and variety of person and incident.

The form of the lyric, moreover, differs essentially from that of the drama and the epic in that it was originally sung to the accompaniment of the lyre ; and it is still in its essence and spirit a song. The musical quality belongs peculiarly to it ; the singing note vibrates through it. A true lyric, simple, subjective, impassioned, has an interior music, a cadence and flow, which carry it to the heart and lodge it in the memory. The songs which suddenly break, as by a spontaneous impulse, from great throngs under the spell of patriotic feel-

ing, the hymns that rise like the breath of prayer, the verses that children repeat, the poems that come unbidden to the lips in moments of deep feeling, in solitude, in exultation, are lyrics. To the lyric the heart of humanity is committed, and in the lyric all feelings and thoughts that are born of the inner life are revealed and expressed. In the drama and the epic lyrical passages are not wanting ; for whenever the poet is swept by his emotion into his song the note instantly becomes lyrical. The past belongs largely to the epic, which preserves and transmits it ; but the future belongs to the lyric ; for prophecy is always lyrical. The epic has the massiveness and dignity of sculpture ; the lyric has the variety, the spontaneity, the penetrating quality of music. The lyrical poet sings out of his own experience, but that experience is part of universal experience, and so his personal song becomes typical and of universal significance. "He is the true lyric poet," says Ulrici, "who portrays not merely his own personal subjectivity, but that of the human mind generally, of which his own is but a particular manifestation."

CRITICISM : ORIGIN.

THE two literary forms which have been developed to their full compass in recent years, and which may be characterized as essentially the creations of modern times, are the novel and criticism. The last century and a half have seen the rise of successive schools of critical writers ; men whose work has been in the highest sense influential, and in a very true sense original. Lessing, Herder, Winkelmann, Goethe, Coleridge, Carlyle, Sainte-Beuve, Arnold, Emerson, Amiel, Lowell, and Stedman have put their strength largely into criticism of art and life, and have deepened and expanded criticism as a literary form until it has lost its derivative and secondary character and become one of the forms through which the literary impulse finds original expression.

The great writers, whose names are identified with criticism, have not been drawn to the work of other men by force of the scholarly instinct ; they have sought and found in the study of literature a revelation of the soul and of the laws of life and art. The survey of literature as a whole has disclosed the deep unity of the human mind in the minds and art of many races, and the unity of literature as an expression of that mind. As a result of this broad and comprehensive study of litera-

ture we are fast discovering the secrets of race inheritance, temperament, and genius ; the characteristics of each family of races ; the political, spiritual, and social forces which dominated each literary epoch ; and the fact or facts of experience, the stage or process of vital change and growth behind each great literary form. In this manner we have come to know the Greek race through the Greek literature and art, and the art and literature, in turn, have become real to us as expressions of the life behind them. In this manner we have learned also why the drama is the foremost literary form in one age, the lyric in another, and the novel in another. We owe this vast enlargement of our ideas about literature to the modern critical movement ; which is, at bottom, not a study, comparison, and judgment of particular books, but a broad and deep survey of literature as one of the great activities, and as the most complete expression of the human soul.

The earliest criticism was necessarily a scholarly examination and determination of texts. There can be no criticism until there is abundant material for comparison and co-ordination. The criticism which holds a judicial attitude toward books, which constitutes itself a supreme tribunal of judgment, cannot begin its examinations, or record its decrees, until great literary creations have furnished it with standards, and supplied it with the criteria of criticism from their own excellences ;

nor can the criticism which studies literature as a revelation of the spirit of man begin its work until a vast mass of original documents in the form of literary works is ready to its hand. Criticism in any form, therefore, must be a late creation in point of time, and must follow after a fruitful period or periods of production.

The first form of criticism, such as was developed at Alexandria at the close of the classical period, or as appeared in the later stages of the Renaissance in Italy, was largely textual, concerned chiefly with the settlement of questions of text; and although this kind of criticism is secondary work, its importance is very great. To the obscure but faithful scholars who have rescued those great classics which were in peril of permanent mutilation or loss, we are more indebted than to many original writers of high rank. Concerning Heminge and Condell, the two editors of the folio edition of Shakespeare which appeared in 1623, Mr. Lowell says: "I doubt if posterity owes a greater debt to any two men living in 1623, than to the two obscure actors who in that year published the first folio edition of Shakespeare's plays. But for them, it is more than likely that such of his works as had remained to that time unprinted would have been irrecoverably lost, and among them were 'Julius Cæsar,' 'The Tempest,' and 'Macbeth.'" The loss of Marlowe and Jonson would have been a great one; but if most of us

had to choose between the works of these powerful minds and the eighteen plays of Shakespeare, for which the first folio is our only authority, we should hold to Shakespeare and give up Marlowe and Jonson. In this sense the two actors and friends of the great dramatist, who put his work into shape for preservation, have served posterity better than many original writers of their time.

The Alexandrian critics were the successors of a long line of Greek students of the "Iliad" and "Odyssey," but their chief work was still with the Homeric text. They were in possession, probably for the first time, of the great mass of material already existent, dating back to the time of Onomacritus, relating to the form and substance of what may be called the Greek Bible. In the libraries there was to be found the material by which a whole critical movement could be inspired. The work of the grammarians, inspired as most of it undoubtedly was by the true dry-as-dust spirit, was of immense importance to posterity. One of these critical scholars, Aristarchus, attained an authority so great that he put his own revision in place of all earlier texts, and to him, in the judgment of modern scholars, we probably owe the preservation of the text of the Homeric poems. This was the great service of the Alexandrian critics, but by no means their sole activity; in æsthetic, philosophical, symbolic, and esoteric interpretation of the Homeric works they fore-

shadowed all the vices and extravagances of some modern critics.

It is to the enthusiasm and generosity of a few Italian collectors of manuscripts that we owe the recovery of the greater part of the Greek literature which we possess, and upon which the Alexandrian critics had done their work. Pope Nicholas V. embarrassed himself, while still a monk, by his lavish expenditure for the recovery and copying of manuscripts, and when he was elevated to the Papal chair, agents in his employ searched the monasteries and libraries of Europe for classical works. Poggio, searching the religious houses of southern Germany, came upon six orations of Cicero, and the first complete copy of Quintilian. The great works of classical literature came to light one after another, were copied, spread through Italy, and libraries were rapidly formed. From the study of these manuscripts, rarely identical and often differing more widely than the first quarto and the first folio of Shakespeare, the earliest modern criticism took its rise. Textual criticism became the first and most pressing duty of the Italian Humanists. To recover the classical works, and to settle the text, was the necessary prelude to the æsthetic and philosophic criticism which followed.

CRITICISM : DEVELOPMENT.

TEXTUAL criticism is necessarily secondary work ; it belongs to scholarship rather than to literature ; but it is of very high importance, since we owe to its zeal and industry the preservation and purification of some of the noblest works of earlier literature. *Æsthetic* criticism comes later and concerns itself with the laws of art, the standards of taste, with adequacy and beauty of form, with veracity and range of idea. It studies a drama, an epic, or a novel as a piece of art, discerns its purpose, interprets its execution in the light of its aim, compares it with the greatest works in the same department and holds it to what the critic believes to be the ultimate standards and laws of artistic creation. Criticism of this quality is secondary in point of time, and dependent on the wide and varied production of original work of the highest class. For the laws of art are matter of induction ; it is by the disclosure of beauty and power in creative works that the mind is trained to recognize excellence and enabled to define it. No single literary work, however great, could have afforded complete material for the evolution of *æsthetic* criticism ; it is true that creations of such force as the Homeric poems and the " Divine Comedy " have stimulated research and developed critical power in a marvelous

way, but kindred works must be before the mind before the full range of even one literary form can be comprehended. The classical drama, complete as it was in itself, and noble as it was in idea and form, gave no hint of the romantic drama ; surely no one would now venture to formulate the principles of dramatic art without taking account of Shakespeare, Calderon and Schiller. *Æsthetic* criticism was not possible to the Greeks until the truth and beauty of their great literary works had penetrated the national mind, and revealed both the Greek genius and that quality of supreme expression which, once seen, becomes forever after as a new law to men. The sculptor who comes after Phidias will not touch the same subjects nor follow the same methods, but he must show a kindred mastery of his material and his thought ; Sophocles, pressing close behind *Æschylus*, will disclose a different order of mind and look at life from a different point of view, but he will rival his great compeer in the range and beauty of his art. *Æsthetic* criticism follows, therefore, those fertile periods which by the range and variety of their productions disclose new sources of power, wider sweep of idea, and broader range of form and execution.

When Aristotle declared, in a phrase which has become famous, that the effect of tragedy is to purge the mind through pity and fear, he had before him the complete Greek stage in the works of its

three masters. So far as the classical drama was concerned, all the material for criticism existed ; but as a disclosure of the full possibilities of the drama as a form of expression even the Attic stage was incomplete. The Romantic drama must run its course ; the dramatic form, as employed not only in Greece but in India, and in modern Europe, must be completely developed. And when the drama had been fully elaborated, and the genius of many races had pressed every note of power and melody out of it, other elements must be taken into account before its final and full significance was recognized. It must be studied in the light of a complete literary development ; it must find its place in the large movement of history. To a full comprehension of the significance of the drama as a literary form, and as an expression of life, there was necessary, therefore, not only its complete development under many diverse conditions and by many races, but familiarity with literature in all its forms, and clear perception of the historic life behind the work of art.

And what is true of the drama, is true also of every other literary form : of the epic, the lyric, the ballad, the novel. In order to rightly comprehend the strength and influence of one nation adequate knowledge of all other nations must be first secured ; in order to get at the real value and large meaning of any literary creation all literature must lie within the vision. One may enjoy Burns

to the full without knowing anything of English poetry or of Scottish history ; but no one can understand the sources of the poet's power, the streams that fed him as the mountain rivulets feed the rivers of the valley, the significance of his work in the development of English literature, or the matchless charm of that work on the one hand and its limitations on the other, unless he is able to place Burns in true relation to Scottish life, to English poetry, and to lyrical verse in universal literature. A single flower involves the existence of the universe ; earth and sky are met and married in its bloom and fragrance ; a single poet involves race, history, climate, art, humanity.

CRITICISM : SCOPE AND SIGNIFICANCE.

THE conditions which have made this comprehensive study of the conditions of literature possible have not existed until within a comparatively recent period. It is true there are glimpses here and there, in the great minds of the past, of this vital relation of literature to life, and of its scope and meaning as an expression of the spirit of man in the terms of art ; but there is no clear perception of it, and no adequate definition of the greatest of the arts of expression. It was reserved for a small group of German thinkers and writers, in the last century, to see clearly the vital relation of art to life, the unity of all art, the harmony of all expressions of the human soul with the universal soul of man, and the authority of history and art as a revelation of life in men. Many minds have contributed to the working out of what may be called the vital, as distinguished from the abstract idea of history and art ; but we owe to Herder, Winkelmann, Lessing, and Goethe a peculiar and lasting obligation for their varied but harmonious exposition of this deep and luminous conception ; perhaps the most fundamental and characteristic idea which modern thought has produced. Winkelmann's contribution to the knowledge of art may be taken as an illustration of the general

work of these thinkers. Instead of looking at Greek sculpture as comprising a series of detached and unrelated works, he discerned the unity and harmony of these works as the varied expressions of a single impulse or activity ; more than this, he discerned the vital relation of sculpture, as the Greeks practiced it, to their genius, their temper, and their life. He saw that no individual impulse or skill accounted for Greek art, but that its explanation must be sought in the Greek nature. He saw that the art of sculpture in Greek hands was of a piece with all the other arts, and that what was characteristic of Phidias, the sculptor, was also characteristic of Sophocles, the poet, of Plato, the thinker, and of Pericles, the statesman. Everything the Athenians did in their best years was of a piece, and all their arts were so many expressions of their nature. Elevation, simplicity, and repose were characteristics common to sculptured figures, acted dramas, philosophic speculation, and practical statesmanship ; sculpture, literature, philosophy, and oratory were, therefore, vitally related parts of a complete and harmonious expression of Greek life, and the Greek nature was the soil in which all these beautiful growths had their root. Winkelmann discerned the natural history of art ; its response to external conditions ; its large dependence on soil, sky, temperament, religion, political character ; the impress of race upon it. He saw, in a word, the unity of Greek life and history. He

put a vital process in place of an abstract idea, a living organism in place of unrelated products of individual skill.

Herder, fresh from the study of the Bible, of Shakespeare, and of the English ballads, approached the study of history and literature in the same spirit. He put aside all ideas of artificial production; he saw that literature is a natural growth; that its roots are in the life of man, and that it responds to the changing conditions of that life as swiftly and surely as vegetation responds to a change of soil; each soil nourishing the growth to which it is specially adapted. The significant word with Herder was growth; because growth implies natural process as opposed to mechanical process, spontaneous impulse as distinguished from conscious action, genius as contrasted with artifice, and the personality of the writer as against abstract ideas. His thought of what goes to the making of a great work of literature is well expressed in these words of Goethe's: "Everything that a man undertakes to produce, whether by action, word, or in whatsoever way, ought to spring from the union of all his faculties." In other words, a work of art is an expression of a man's whole nature and life; something that grows out of him and not something which he puts together with mechanical dexterity. Herder discerned the natural history of literature, its vital relation to the life behind it, its close and inevitable connection with human history and

development. "Poetry in those happy days," he declared, "lived in the ears of the people, on the lips and in the harps of living bards ; it sang of history, of the events of the day, of mysteries, miracles, and signs. It was the flower of a nation's character, language, and country ; of its occupations, its prejudices, its passions, its aspirations, and its soul." The epic was "the living history of the people." This profound view of life and its arts is now familiar to us, but it was strange and revolutionary to the contemporaries of Herder. It involved a reconstruction of ideas regarding art, and a reorganization of knowledge. The great conception of society as a development, an unfolding under certain fixed conditions and laws, was implicit in it. Goethe, with his poetic sensitiveness to the approach of new ideas, and an amplitude of mind which made him hospitable to new truth, accepted the nature of man as having the authority of a revelation, and refused to reject any part of it. In history, religion, art, and literature he discerned the endeavor of the soul to express itself, its experience, and its hopes ; the natural history of man is written in his works ; they all issue from his life, and together they form the record and disclosure of his nature.

In this manner a new and deeper view of literature was presented, and now holds the field against all mechanical and individualistic theories. It is an interpretation not to be pressed too far, but

one which broadly expresses the fundamental truth when it declares that literature is a vital product of the soul, a comprehensive and harmonious art and, therefore, a revelation of life to men. This idea is the largest and most fruitful result of criticism ; of the study not of one piece of literature, or of one form of literature, or even of the literature of a race, but of all literature.

THE NOVEL: EVOLUTION.

THE story of incident and adventure, and the romance pure and simple, are as old as literature. The story element enters into the epic, the drama, and the ballad ; it is one of the original and primary elements of literature. Collections of stories were well known in classical times ; stories have been told by professional *raconteurs* in Oriental countries from time immemorial, and are still recited to listening groups in Bagdad and Damascus. The mediæval romances were numberless and of almost interminable length ; they have furnished material for an immense mass of modern literature. These romances, which belonged to the court, the castle, and the university, were gigantic fabrications of the imagination ; for the most part they move entirely in an unreal world. The Italian story-tellers, with Boccaccio at their head, exchanged the cloud land of pure fancy for the solid earth of real happenings, or of incidents which came within the range of possibility. But they were story-tellers, not novelists ; their interest was in the story, not in the characters. The romances of Mlle. Scudéry, which were so widely read during the last half of the seventeenth, and the early part of the eighteenth century, were as extravagant and unreal as the romances of chivalry.

"Le Grand Cyrus" fills two octavo volumes and abounds in improbabilities such as would have delighted Ariosto.

Side by side with these extravagant romances, which were the solace and resource of Church and State and Society, grew up a multitude of homely stories which were handed down from generation to generation among the common people ; stories which were often coarse, but which dealt with real things and were full of satiric descriptions of persons, peculiarities, and idiosyncracies ; the first efforts to portray real life and to sketch character. The modern novel is the evolution of this popular story rather than of the romance which for centuries overshadowed it. In "Don Quixote," Cervantes united both stories : the element of romance in the Knight and the popular element in the Squire. "Gil Blas," was conceived in the satiric spirit of the popular tale. "Robinson Crusoe," published in 1719, was a story of incident, but it had the homeliness of interest, the directness and implicitness of manner, the realistic method of the popular tale ; so also had Richardson's "Pamela," which appeared in 1740, and from which it is customary to date the beginning of English fiction. For, in spite of its sentimentality, "Pamela" deals with what might have been an actual experience, and its heroine is a girl of humble origin and station. In these stories, which show the impress of the popular tale, the interest is more

and more transferred from incident and adventure to the study and unfolding of character. The impulse behind the modern novel, the novel of manners and character, which gives it its importance and significance as one of the few literary forms created in modern times, is unquestionably the deepening interest in the study of real life and the growing sense of the solidarity of society.

The novel, as a form of literature, is contemporaneous with a new and deepening consciousness of human relationship and obligation. To-day we feel more distinctly than ever before the unceasing and pervasive influence of other lives upon our life ; we are weighted down as never before by a sense of our incalculable obligations to our fellows. We no longer think of ourselves as alone but always in the thick of relationships of every kind and quality ; in the solitude of our own souls we are conscious of the whole striving, suffering world about us. Manfred and Obermann no longer move us ; we are touched and penetrated by the story of those whose lives are in the current and not moored in eddies. The hero of to-day does not consume his soul in solitary struggles with the mysteries of life, but spends himself without stint in the common service. The Faust who began by endeavoring to pierce the mystery of existence by knowledge ends by building dykes to reclaim the earth and enlarge the opportunities of his fellows. As the drama represented the struggles of men, first

against forces outside themselves, and, later, against tendencies within themselves, so does the novel represent the recognition by men of their complicated social relationships, and the variety, the nature, and the forces of the subtle and manifold influences which are set in motion by these relationships. Fiction exhibits men always in society ; the individual character is always developed by contact with others.

Character is exhibited under the pressure of every form of inheritance and contemporary influence chiefly as it is developed in relations with other lives, from which it receives, and to which it imparts, potential impulses of every kind and quality. Men and women are brought face to face with social conditions, standards, forces, and conventions, and the problem of the individual life is worked out with full recognition of the play and interplay of countless social influences and tendencies. Society, not isolation, furnishes the necessary environment of the great characters of fiction ; and the depth and universality of human interest in all that goes to the making of human life supplies the underlying motive of all great novels.

Richardson endeavored to impose a definite moral purpose upon the novel ; but art has its own laws, and fiction has taken the direction of the vital movement which it interprets as a literary form ; it has ceased to be a medium for definite moral

instruction and become, in the hands of the great novelists, a powerful portraiture of life itself. Nothing is so intensely moral as life pierced to its depths ; and all great fiction, in common with great art of every kind, must always be profoundly moral in the real if not in the conventional meaning of the word.

THE NOVEL : SIGNIFICANCE.

FICTION, as a literary form, has steadily advanced in importance as the social idea has gained in clearness and control ; has steadily deepened and broadened as the sense of social obligation and the feeling of social sympathy have deepened and broadened. "Sir Charles Grandison" and "Pamela" have a lessened interest for a generation who have known what life meant to "Adam Bede" and "Anna Karénina"; but the difference between the earlier and later novelists is not so great as the difference between our ancestors and ourselves. We no longer weep over the misfortunes of romantic gentlemen and the misery of lovelorn ladies of high degree ; life has become so earnest, through our new consciousness of the community of suffering among all men, that we are no longer touched by the old conventional devices of the novelists. The great novels of to-day are so pervaded by life, so profoundly vitalized by genuine insight and sympathy, that they often seem more real to us than the experiences through which we actually pass. We accept nothing as art which does not first convince us of its reality as life.

It would be easy and profitable to point out the individual contributions of the great novelists to the science which concerns itself with men in their

social relations ; but it must suffice to emphasize the significance of fiction as a form of literary art. Each master of this modern art has illustrated some aspect of social life, some form of social influence, some peculiar social condition. The novel of tendency has been only a little more emphatic, a little more consciously directed to a given end, than the great mass of novels of the first rank. "Romola" and "Anna Karénina" are as definite and decisive in their purpose as "Uncle Tom's Cabin," or "Ramona." Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot, Björnson, Tourguéneff, Balzac, Spielhagen, Zola, Daudet, are never triflers ; whatever their differences and their defects, they are always profoundly in earnest to represent the fact as they see it. The fact may be repulsive, even loathsome, but it is always a fact worth considering because of its human significance. Tourguéneff's "Annals of a Sportsman," Mrs. Stowe's "Uncle Tom's Cabin," Mrs. Jackson's "Ramona," Walter Besant's "All Sorts and Conditions of Men," have each produced results so definite and marked as to be unmistakable ; but these stories have not been more earnest in tone than Daudet's "Nabob" or "Jack," Thackeray's "Vanity Fair," Balzac's "Eugénie Grandet," George Eliot's "Middlemarch." Each of these admirable works, and all works of their rank, have touched life at first hand, and portrayed or interpreted it with masterly insight and power. In each the social instinct has

been evident, and each in turn has disclosed some social fact in its large relations and results. To see life as it is and men as they are is the common purpose of all great writers of fiction.

So complete and searching has been the survey of social life by the novelists that the society of to-day, with all its gradations and differences, could be reproduced from the pages of fiction. From the days of Fielding to those of Charles Reade, English life has never missed faithful record at the hands of those who have comprehended it because they have pierced it with their sympathetic insight. Every great political movement like Chartism, every striking political incident like the Gordon riots, every form of discontent and agitation among the lower classes, has had fit and often lasting record. While George Eliot has set forth the tremendous force of inheritance and environment, the vigorous and often coarse brush of Dickens has painted, on a great canvas, the homely life of the common people ; and the inimitable art of Thackeray, equally akin to irony and tears, has made us permanent possessors of the social habit and character of the last century. The virile genius of Björnson, in the latest work of his hand, "Flags in the City and the Harbor," deals with some of the most obscure problems of social and family life ; Tourguéneff has made Russian character under the pressure of absolutism comprehensible to us ; Tolstoi commands the attention of a new constituency

of readers, deeply moved by the marvelous fidelity with which he reproduces phases of experience, hidden processes of character, at once remote and familiar ; while of Zola it must be confessed, whatever we think of his themes and his art, that he at least assumes to lay bare the very heart of certain social conditions in France. Fiction is unquestionably the most attractive and influential form through which men of literary genius express themselves to-day ; and no fact of social significance, no human relationship, no class limitation, capacity, or condition, will escape the instinctive search for life which possesses this generation. That which the student of social questions seeks as matter of science the novelist seeks as matter of art.

THE IMPULSE BEHIND LITERATURE

IF literature is an outcome of life, it follows that with the increase of self-consciousness in the normal sense, and of freedom and fullness of expression, there will be a vast expansion of literary activity. In earlier times the books of power were fewer because there were fewer persons who joined to the artistic instinct clear consciousness of what was in their own minds and hearts. The elect souls who attained self-knowledge spoke for a host of men and women who were silent because they had not come into complete possession of themselves. When any large number of persons in any race, at any time, attained this clear understanding of what was in their own souls, this definite and luminous perception of their own relation to the world and to their fellows, there was a sudden outburst of literary activity and a powerful representation of life in art. In this country, after the struggle which secured national autonomy and defined the form of our political life, we gave ourselves mainly to the pressing and practical work of developing the continent and our own life in harmony with new conditions. In the definite political issues which became open questions almost as soon as the Constitution was adopted, there was constant appeal to principles ; but, in the main, Amer-

ican thought and energy were absorbed in the task of creating a new nation. The struggle which began in 1861 developed national self-consciousness; it drove us to a searching examination of the political ideas and the governmental forms on which the American State rested. For the first time we understood clearly the real meaning of our political organization and the social life which it has developed. We began to rationalize our experience, and to strive for a philosophical statement of our life. The result has been a rapidly increasing literature relating to our history, our institutions, our political ideas, the working of our political system, our economic condition, our social life. We have come to national self-consciousness and consequently to self-expression.

For self-consciousness and self-expression are as inseparable as the genius of the composer and the music through which it reports itself; as the impulse of the sculptor and carven stone in which it stands revealed. As clear knowledge of self, full realization of personality, become general, the impulse and the faculty of expression cease to be the peculiar possession of a few elect spirits, and become the gift of a multitude. The highest manifestation of life, which we will call genius, remains a rare and mysterious possession; the fact that the English race has come to a large measure of self-knowledge has not given us another Shakespeare; but it has given us a vast expansion of literary

expression and a great group of effective writers. Now, it is this general development of self-knowledge which characterizes modern life and reveals itself in the variety and diversity of modern literature. Humanity has come to a large measure of maturity. It has had a long history, which has been the record of its efforts to know its own nature and to master the field and implements of its activity. It has made countless experiments, and has learned quite as much from its failures as from its successes. It has laboriously traversed the island in space where its fortunes are cast ; it has listened intently, generation after generation, for some message from beyond the seas which encompassed it. It has made every kind of venture to enlarge its capital of pleasure, and has often hazarded its gains for some nobler fortune of which it has dreamed. It has opened its arms to receive the joys of life, and, missing them, has patiently clasped a crucifix. It has drank every cup of experience, won all victories, and suffered all defeats ; tested all creeds, and acted all philosophies ; illustrated all baseness, and risen to the heights of all nobleness. In short, humanity has lived, not in a few persons, a few periods, a few activities ; but in countless persons, through long centuries, under all conditions. Some larger and more comprehensive idea of life surely lies in the mind of the modern world than ever defined itself to the men of earlier time. Humanity has much to

learn, and its education is still perchance in its primary stages, but men have lived long enough to attain a fairly complete self-consciousness. Humanity has come to maturity, and to the self-knowledge which is the power of maturity.

With maturity has come the impulse to expression ; for expression is the habit of civilized life. There is within us an instinctive recognition of the universal quality in thought and experience ; we feel that, in a sense, neither can be private property. They belong to the world, and even when we endeavor to keep them to ourselves they elude and escape us. No sooner is a thought expressed than a hundred men claim ownership in it. Thought is, so to speak, in the air, and often finds simultaneous expression in quarters most remote from each other. There is a large and noble consistency behind our fragmentary thinking which makes us aware of some great order of things with which we are unconsciously working. Our lesser thought is seen, in the end, to be part of a larger thought. The same general tendencies are discoverable at almost any given time in science, art, philosophy, theology, and literature. The workers in the different fields are unwitting witnesses to a higher and more comprehensive truth than that which each is bent upon demonstrating. There is, in other words, a continuous revelation of ultimate things through the totality of human activity and experience, and this revelation, which is coextensive

with human life, presses upon men for expression. Whether they aid or obstruct, it will utter itself ; behind all life it sets its mighty impulse, and nothing can resist it. With the expansion of modern life the expansion of literature was inevitable ; it was inevitable that new literary forms like the novel should be fashioned ; that facts, hitherto suppressed or unobserved, should be brought to light, and that aspects of experiences hitherto unrecorded should suddenly enshrine themselves in art.

The last word will not be spoken in literature until men cease to think ; the last form will not be perfected until they cease to express what is in them. There will be changes of taste, modifications of language, revolutions in thought ; but the art in which the human soul reflects itself will produce its masterpieces to the very end of time. There will always be a new revelation of life to command, a new perception or disclosure of beauty to inspire expression. Life is exhaustless and forever renews itself ; and so long as this sublime mystery of intelligence and energy surrounds men and works through them, so long will literature renew its freshness, its power, and its beauty. Art and nature will move together to the very end.

THE END.

